Frommer's

European Cruises & Ports of Call



VISIT…



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3rd Edition

by Fran Wenograd Golden & Jerry Brown

Here's what the critics say about Frommer's:

"Amazingly easy to use. Very portable, very complete."
—Booklist

"Detailed, accurate, and easy-to-read information for all price ranges."
—Glamour Magazine

"Frommer's Guides have a way of giving you a real feel for a place."
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Back cover photo: Villefranche harbor, Côte d'Azur

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About the Authors

Fran Wenograd Golden is travel editor of the *Boston Herald,* author of *Cruise Vacations For Dummies,* coauthor of *Frommer's Alaska Cruises & Ports of Call* (with Jerry), and author of *TVacations: A Fun Guide to the Sites, the Stars and the Inside Stories Behind Your Favorite TV Shows.* She lives north of Boston with her husband, Ed, and two teenagers, Erin and Eli, who love traveling and join her on the road (and on the high seas) whenever school and job commitments permit.

Jerry Brown was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, and worked on Scottish newspapers and then in the news department of the *London Daily Mail*. Later, for 31 years, he was the West Coast bureau chief of a leading travel trade publication, and he's the other coauthor (with Fran) of *Frommer's Alaska Cruises & Ports of Call.* He and Margaret, his wife and best editor, have two grown sons, Mark and Paul, and as a family unit and individually they have sailed the waters of Europe on numerous occasions. Jerry is the proud grandfather of Victoria Rose, whom he hopes someday to introduce to the joys of a European cruise vacation.

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An Invitation to the Reader

In researching this book, we discovered many wonderful places—hotels, restaurants, shops, and more. We're sure you'll find others. Please tell us about them, so we can share the information with your fellow travelers in upcoming editions. If you were disappointed with a recommendation, we'd love to know that, too. Please write to:

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An Additional Note

Please be advised that travel information is subject to change at any time—and this is especially true of prices. We therefore suggest that you write or call ahead for confirmation when making your travel plans. The authors, editors, and publisher cannot be held responsible for the experiences of readers while traveling. Your safety is important to us, however, so we encourage you to stay alert and be aware of your surroundings. Keep a close eye on cameras, purses, and wallets, all favorite targets of thieves and pickpockets.

Other Great Guides for Your Trip:

Frommer's England
Frommer's Europe
Frommer's France
Frommer's Germany
Frommer's Greece
Frommer's Greek Islands
Frommer's Ireland
Frommer's Italy
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Frommer's Scotland
Frommer's Spain
and other great city, regional, and budget guides

Other Great Frommer's Cruise Guides:

Frommer's Alaska Cruises & Ports of Call
Frommer's Caribbean Cruises & Ports of Call

Frommer's Star Ratings, Icons & Abbreviations

Every hotel, restaurant, and attraction listing in this guide has been ranked for quality, value, service, amenities, and special features using a **star-rating system.** In country, state, and regional guides, we also rate towns and regions to help you narrow down your choices and budget your time accordingly. Hotels and restaurants are rated on a scale of zero (recommended) to three stars (exceptional). Attractions, shopping, nightlife, towns, and regions are rated according to the following scale: zero stars (recommended), one star (highly recommended), two stars (very highly recommended), and three stars (must-see).

In addition to the star-rating system, we also use **eight feature icons** that point you to the great deals, in-the-know advice, and unique experiences that separate travelers from tourists. Throughout the book, look for:

Finds	Special finds—those places only insiders know about
Fun Fact	Fun facts—details that make travelers more informed and their trips more fun
Kids	Best bets for kids, and advice for the whole family
Moments	Special moments—those experiences that memories are made of
Overrated	Places or experiences not worth your time or money
Tips	Insider tips—great ways to save time and money
Value	Great values—where to get the best deals
Warning	Warning—traveler's advisories are usually in effect

The following **abbreviations** are used for credit cards:

AE	American Express	DISC	Discover	V	Visa
DC	Diners Club	MC	MasterCard		

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Now that you have the guidebook to a great trip, visit our website at **www.frommers.com** for travel information on more than 3,000 destinations. With features updated regularly, we give you instant access to the most current trip-planning information available. At Frommers.com, you'll also find the best prices on airfares, accommodations, and car rentals—and you can even book travel online through our travel booking partners. At Frommers.com, you'll also find the following:

- Online updates to our most popular guidebooks
- Vacation sweepstakes and contest giveaways
- Newsletter highlighting the hottest travel trends
- Online travel message boards with featured travel discussions

Introduction

Fran first cruised in Europe—or more exactly, *to* Europe—in 1959 when she was 3 years old and her mother, brother, and she traveled transatlantic from New York to Southampton on the old *United States.* She remembers nothing of the trip by sea, but obviously something stuck because she loves to visit Europe, loves to cruise, and finds it great fun to combine the two. She explores Europe's waters as often as she can, usually in the company of friends (both American and European) or her family (her teenagers and husband fight over who gets to go along).

Although he was born and raised in Europe (in Scotland), Jerry didn't cruise the region until much later than Fran, in 1984, on the *Pacific Princess* (now retired from Princess Cruises' fleet). The cruise still evokes happy memories and laughter in the Brown household. The cabin steward delighted and amused Jerry's sons (then ages 14 and 9) by deliberately exaggerating his Cockney accent to make himself virtually unintelligible to them. And there is, in the Brown family album, a classic photograph of Jerry's sons on that cruise looking utterly bored among the ruins of Pompeii. (Remember that if you're dragging teens to sites of ancient civilizations. Take them, by all means. Just don't be surprised if they pretend not to be enjoying it!) The kids, now grown, agree that cruising Europe is by and large a joy, and the Browns individually and as a group have cruised to and in Europe umpteen times since.

Whether you are a first-time visitor to the region or are returning to see countries you've visited before from a new oceanview perspective (many European cities were built to be seen from the sea) and at a different pace, cruising in Europe can be wonderful.

The ports in Europe hold treasures of antiquities and natural beauty, fascinating history (you'll quickly realize how young 1776 is in the scheme of things), and enchanting cultural experiences.

From your ship, depending on the route you choose, you will have easy access to such delights as the ancient cities of Pompeii and Ephesus; Europe's historic and cultural capitals, including London, Paris, and Rome; modern port cities; gorgeous islands; scenic fjords; rugged coastlines; and glamorous resorts.

You can visit museums, cathedrals, palaces, and monuments and learn about the region's history. Or you can concentrate on the Europe of today, checking out the trends in food and fashion before they hit the shores of the U.S.

WHY A CRUISE?

Europe is a popular cruising region, second only to the Caribbean (and followed by Alaska in third place), and it's a no-brainer to see why. The region truly offers something for everyone: great sights, shopping, beaches, museums, cultural and natural attractions, and a decent climate.

The **ports** are close together, meaning you can visit several in a limited period of time; the seas relatively calm;

Europe


Norwegian Sea
NORTH ATLANTIC OCEAN
Bergen
NORWAY
GRAMPIAN
Aberdeen
TAYSIDE
Perth
Edinburgh
North Sea
DENMARK
Belfast
IRELAND
Dublin
DINGLE PENINSULA
KERRY COUNTY
Liverpool
U.K.
COTSWOLDS
Oxford
Bath
Stonehenge
Salisbury
London
THE NETHERLANDS
Hamburg
Amsterdam
Bruges
BELGIUM
GERMANY
English Channel
Brussels
Liège
Bonn
Le Havre
LUX.
Frankfurt
Rothenburg ob der Tauber
Paris
Strasbourg
Augsburg
LOIRE VALLEY
Munich
BAVARIAN ALPS
Bay of Biscay
FRANCE
Bern
Innsbruck
SWITZERLAND
Geneva
BERNER OBERLAND
Bordeaux
Milan
Bilbao
Arles
PROVENCE
MONACO
Florence
Porto
Marseille
Nice
Côte d'Azur
TUSCANY
ANDORRA
PORTUGAL
Madrid
Barcelona
CORSICA
Lisbon
SPAIN
Córdoba
Valencia
ALGARVE
SARDINIA
Seville
ANDALUSIA
Granada
Cagliari
Malaga
Mediterranean Sea
Costa del Sol
0 150 mi
0 150 km
N


SWEDEN
Trondheim
Sundsvall
Gulf of Bothnia
FINLAND
Tampere
Helsinki
St. Petersburg
Oslo
Gavle
Stockholm
Tallinn
ESTONIA
RUSSIA
Moscow
Riga
LATVIA
Göteborg
Baltic Sea
Copenhagen
LITHUANIA
RUSSIA
Vilnius
Kaliningrad
Minsk
Gdansk
BELARUS
Berlin
Poznan
Warsaw
POLAND
Kiev
Karlovy Vary (Carlsbad)
Prague
Krakow
Lvov
UKRAINE
CZECH REPUBLIC
Danube River
SLOVAKIA
Vienna
Bratislava
KITZBÜHEL ALPS
DANUBE VALLEY
Salzburg
Budapest
MOLDOVA
Chisinau
Odessa
AUSTRIA
HUNGARY
Cluj-Napoca
Lake Balaton
Ljubljana
SLOVENIA
Zagreb
CROATIA
ROMANIA
Venice
Belgrade
Bucharest
Constanta
Black Sea
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA
Sarajevo
SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO
Varna
BULGARIA
Adriatic Sea
ITALY
Sofiya
Skopje
Podgorica
THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA
Istanbul
Rome
Tirana
Naples
Pompeii
ALBANIA
TURKEY
Tyrrhenian Sea
GREECE
Aegean Sea
Delphi
Ionian Sea
Athens
CYCLADES
Palermo
SICILY
PELOPONNESE
CYPRUS
Mediterranean Sea
CRETE
MALTA

the opportunities interesting and diverse. Europe has a seafaring tradition that goes back to ancient times—you can even choose an itinerary that follows the exact route of the ancient mariners—so is it any wonder a European cruise sounds so exciting and romantic?

A cruise is also one of the most practical, comfortable, and economical ways to see Europe. You only have to unpack once, your floating hotel takes you to different ports in different countries, and you don't have to deal with the hassle and expense of getting around Europe by plane or train.

On a cruise you are fed, pampered, and taken care of in a stress-free environment. You don't have to worry about currency fluctuations and their effect on your hotel, entertainment, and meal costs, because all of these are included in your cruise fare. Food will be familiar—you can even sip a piña colada while viewing, say, St. Petersburg—and you don't have to deal with language problems, because there will be personnel on the ship who speak English.

A downside to cruising is that you might not have as much time as you'd like in port to experience the local culture, although some lines overnight in cities like Venice, Monte Carlo, and Istanbul, and smaller ships may overnight in smaller cities. The cruise lines do their best, through their organized shore excursions, to get passengers to the major sights. And if you'd rather sit at a cafe and check out the local scene than do an organized tour, you can head off on your own.

We've found that when cruising in Europe, it's best to think of your cruise as a **sampler package.** If you fall in love with a city, plan on visiting again later.

EUROPEAN CRUISING 2004

Cruise lines—including major American lines like Princess, Holland America, Royal Caribbean, Norwegian Cruise Line, and Celebrity—were steadily increasing their presence in Europe. Then came the tragic events of September 11, 2001. In the aftermath, some travelers were hesitant to go to Europe. Several ships slated for Europe itineraries were actually moved to other markets like the Caribbean and Alaska for the 2002 season. The War in Iraq also caused a few ships to move out of Europe in 2003, but most lines stuck with their Europe itineraries. To get passengers back, the lines offered steep discounts, and they got a decent response. There is pent-up demand for Europe, and cruise lines know this. They also know Europe will be in the news in 2004, especially with the summer Olympics in Athens (several ships have been booked to provide floating hotel rooms for the event). The lines are committing significant numbers of ships to Europe (Holland America for one has four ships in Europe in 2004), and depending on what's happening in the world, this could prove to be a popular year for European cruising.

Cruise passengers can choose from all sorts of itinerary options in Europe and there are a variety of ships to suit everyone's tastes. The European cruising season has expanded from April to October to March to December; there are even winter cruises, mostly in the warmer Mediterranean.

In 2002 (the latest year for which there are statistics), Europe represented 21.1% of passenger cruise capacity (based on cruises marketed to North Americans) compared to 46.6% in the Caribbean. About half of the capacity was in the Mediterranean while the other half cruised other parts of Europe (such as Northern Europe, Norway, and the Baltics). Capacity was down 13.90% in 2002, again, because some ships were pulled for the 2002 season. (Numbers provided by Cruise Lines International Association.)

Because European cruises are so popular—and to encourage even more business—North American cruise companies are putting some of their most impressive ships in the market. For instance, Princess in 2004 has the 2,600-passenger *Grand Princess* and sister ship *Star Princess,* two of the biggest ships in the world, spending the entire summer in Europe. Holland America introduces in Europe this year its brand new 1,848-passenger *Westerdam,* and the HAL Europe fleet also includes the line's flagship, *Rotterdam.* Celebrity offers up the lovely *Millennium,* and those on European cruises will enjoy Royal Caribbean's brand new *Jewel of the Seas,* as well as the *Brilliance of the Seas* and *Splendour of the Seas.* Posh Silversea will have three ships in Europe this summer, including its newer 388-passenger *Silver Shadow* and *Silver Whisper.* And Radisson Seven Seas will have two ships in the market, including the all-suite, all-balcony cabin, 700-passenger *Seven Seas Voyager.* You can see Europe on a giant floating **American resort ship** with Las Vegas–style entertainment, a lavish casino and spa, and a mostly American clientele; choose a ship that's more like a **floating European hotel** where multiple languages will be spoken, Americans will be the minority, and meals will be a form of entertainment; see the continent in posh **luxury** with the very best in service and cuisine; or pick a small, **casual ship** where you can jump off a platform at the stern for a swim.

And you can choose **itineraries** as diverse as the Rivieras, where the sun shines on cafes and beaches in places like St-Tropez; or the Norwegian fjords, where the midnight sun may shine all day and night, but you'll use that light to spot whales and reindeer rather than celebrities in their skimpy bikinis.

You can easily extend whatever itinerary you choose with a **land stay,** which the cruise lines can arrange for you, usually at reasonable rates, or which you can arrange on your own.

The lines have also expanded into different cruise regions in Europe and introduced more 1-week options in addition to more traditional 10- and 12-day Europe itineraries. For instance, several lines have 1-week Baltics itineraries.

Cruising in Europe has been a rather big-ticket item in the past, but a flurry of discount offers have helped bring prices down, and that trend is expected to continue in 2004, making cruising in Europe more affordable. And while Europe has traditionally drawn a senior crowd, the cruise lines, through shorter itineraries and a greater diversity of product, have done a good job of late in attracting families, younger couples, singles, and honeymooners.

BON VOYAGE!

Just the fact that you've bought this book means you've got a hankering to cruise; now it's our job to find the cruise that's just right for you from among the huge selection of ships and cruise experiences in the market. In the following chapters, we'll detail the various and diverse itinerary options in Europe and the types of ships that can take you there. And we'll give you a taste of what you can expect from your European cruise experience.

Whichever cruise option you choose, we're sure your European cruise will leave you wanting to come back again for more.

Frommer's Favorites

Whether you're looking for pampering and resort amenities or an off-the-beaten-track experience, cruise ships offer it in Europe. To make it easier for you to see what's what, we've put together a list of Frommer's Favorites—our picks for the best cruise experiences and offerings. You'll find full details on the ships in part 2, and full details on ports in part 3.

1 Best Ships for Luxury

- **Silversea:** Luxurious without being overly highbrow, this line's ships offer 296 to 382 lucky passengers a heavenly, pampered cruise experience, and win our vote for top choice in the luxury category.
- **Seabourn:** Small and intimate, but with lots of space for all, this line's 204-passenger, sleek, modern ships are floating pleasure palaces with doting service and the finest dinner cuisine at sea.
- **Crystal:** Crystal's dream ships offer the best of two worlds: pampering service and scrumptious cuisine on ships large enough to offer lots of outdoor deck space, generous fitness facilities, four restaurants, and over half a dozen bars and entertainment venues. Crystal's California ethic tends to keep things lively.

2 Best Mainstream Ships

- **Celebrity:** While everyone's new ships are beautiful, Celebrity has proved itself above the norm. We expect that the line's newest ship, *Constellation,* debuting in Europe this year, will carry on the tradition. In particular, we like the cutting-edge art collections aboard the ships. Dining rooms are stunning and feature wonderful French-inspired cuisine, and there are plenty of plush getaway areas including cigar and champagne bars.

3 Best Small Alternative Ships

- **Star Clippers:** These real sailing vessels offer a fun, wind-in-your-face experience in an environment that's surprisingly nice (you won't be roughing it!).
- **Clipper Cruise Line's *Clipper Adventurer:*** The *Clipper Adventurer* is another solid contender in this category—usually attracting an older crowd.

4 Best Ships for Families

- **Princess's *Grand Princess* and *Star Princess:*** Nothing beats these giant ships in this category. The 109,000-ton vessels each have a spacious children's playroom and fenced-in outside deck area designated as kids' space (with a kiddie pool and a fleet of red tricycles). For older kids, the teen center comes complete with computers, video games, a sound system, and even (on the *Grand*

Princess only) a teens-only hot tub and sunbathing area. Supervised activities are offered for those ages 2 to 17. The ships also have amenities designed to please adults and kids alike, including a pizzeria, basketball and volleyball courts, and a virtual-reality game room (including a motion-simulator ride).

5 Best European Ships

- **Costa:** Italian line Costa does the best overall package with interesting entertainment, fun activities, comfortable surroundings, and wonderful itineraries. The line's ownership by Carnival Corp. hasn't hurt it one bit.
- **Swan Hellenic:** Swan Hellenic provides one of the strongest enrichment programs on the high seas, with four or five lecturers giving talks aboard, dining with the passengers, and accompanying them ashore. The non-repeating itineraries, generally lasting 2 weeks, attract a very loyal and generally well-educated British clientele for whom a standard cruise would never do. Good manners and a quiet approach to life reign.

6 Most Romantic Ships

- **Windstar:** Got to go with the sails here. Windstar's large sailing ships are hard to beat for romance. You can snuggle in your comfy cabin watching movies on the VCR or on the deck, enjoy a romantic dinner for two in the open-seating restaurant, and go off hand-in-hand to explore the lovely ports.
- **SeaDream Yacht:** These small, intimate vessels offer ultra luxury in a comfortable way, where dining and conversation are primary evening activities and tables for two are relatively easy to come by. In addition, couples enjoy lots of opportunities for holding hands, whether it's strolling the deck under the stars or lounging in the "Balinese DreamBeds" (puffy outdoor mattresses).

  One couple we know of even chose to dine in the beds, and the crew added to the romance by spreading rose petals all around.

7 Best Value

- **Orient Lines:** Orient Lines' product is solid, port-focused, and popular with an older clientele. Pre- and/or post-cruise hotel stays, airfare, sightseeing, and transfers are all included in the price.
- **First European:** This line's *Azur* is geared towards a budget-conscious crowd (1-week sailings are priced from only $800), and even the line's state-of-the-art newer vessels offer an informal and inexpensive way to see a bunch of neat European locales.
- **Norwegian Coastal Voyage:** This line gives passengers a close-up view of Norway on working ships (they also carry cargo and vehicles) that are both comfortable and budget-priced.

8 Best Ships for Pampering

- **Crystal Cruises:** Crystal indulges guests all around, including in its nice spas.
- **Celebrity Cruises:** Celebrity's ships, including the *Constellation, Millennium,* and *Galaxy,* offer

AquaSpas with indoor thalassotherapy pools and a wealth of soothing and beautifying treatments that are hard to beat.
- **Royal Caribbean:** The *Splendour of the Seas, Brilliance of the Seas,* and brand new *Jewel of the Seas* offer wonderful, soothing Ship-Shape spas with adjacent spacious solarium pool areas.
- **Princess's *Grand Princess and Star Princess:*** Aboard these vessels, a good portion of the Sun Deck is reserved for pampering.
- **Costa's *Costa Atlantica and Mediterranea:*** The spas on these stunning ships offer a big indoor whirlpool and sunning area.

9 Best Ships for Entertainment

- **Royal Caribbean:** The Las Vegas–style shows are well produced, with music provided by a big live band. You'll also find headliners, a variety of cabaret and lounge acts, and even classical music presentations.
- **Celebrity:** Aboard Celebrity's elegant modern ships, you'll find well-produced musical revues of the Broadway-show-tune variety, interactive entertainment like a magician who does card tricks at your table, and good cabaret acts.
- **Holland America:** Their ships offer some of the glitziest costumes afloat (in the show lounge), as well as a variety of cabaret acts including magicians, comedians, and illusionists. An added bonus is the crew talent show, which usually features folk song and dance from the Philippines and Indonesia.
- **Norwegian:** Ambitious show productions (sometimes featuring scenes from Broadway musicals), comedians, and juggling acts are the regular offerings. Excellent local entertainers, including folk dance troupes, come on board in some ports.
- **Princess:** The Las Vegas–style productions are well executed and the cabaret singers excellent (sometimes including known performers). There are also quiet delights like pianists and jazz performers and fun acts like puppeteers and hypnotists.
- **Costa:** Show lounge presentations are creative and include attempts at modern ballet, plus lots of nighttime participatory activities like dance contests, a carnival, and even a Mr. Universe competition.

10 Best Cuisine

- **Radisson Seven Seas Cruises:** The *Radisson Diamond* has one of the nicest dining rooms afloat and fine cuisine to match, with an emphasis on the regions where the ship is cruising. On *Voyager,* Signatures restaurant (operated with Le Cordon Bleu) and Latitudes (with a regional American tasting menu) are the best combination at sea.
- **Crystal:** Crystal's cuisine is well-prepared and creative in the dining rooms and at buffets. But the very best is served in the alternative Asian restaurants, where the offerings include sushi (on the new *Crystal Serenity,* celebrity chef Nobuyuki "Nobu" Matsuhisa is a consultant). There's also a specialty Italian restaurant featuring menus by Valentino in L.A.

- **Seabourn:** The culinary experience on these ships—creative, flavorful, and well-presented—rivals any fine dining you can find on land. Celebrity chef consultant Charlie Parker has helped create dishes that will leave lasting memories.
- **Silversea:** You'll enjoy excellent dining, not only in the main dining room but also at the lavish informal buffets and at theme dinners (Italian, French, Asian) that we highly recommend you make reservations for.
- **Windstar:** Renowned Los Angeles chef Joachim Splichal advises on Windstar's creative "California cuisine" menus and wonderful presentation.
- **Celebrity:** Though not of the same caliber as the luxury lines, Celebrity, with its cuisine overseen by celebrity French chef Michel Roux, is certainly a step above the other mainstream lines, offering sometimes heavily-sauced, French-inspired dishes. Splurge and try the alternative restaurant for dinner (the cover charge is $25 per person, but the dining is worth it).
- **The French river barges:** This is the closest many of us can come to having a private chef. The French-trained chefs aboard these barges can incorporate great local ingredients in their menus.

11 Best Itinerary

- ***Royal Princess:*** For a comprehensive look at Western Europe, we like her 12-day itinerary round-trip from Southampton. Port calls include Bilbao (Spain), Bordeaux and Le Havre (France), Edinburgh (Scotland), Dublin and Cork (Ireland), Falmouth (U.K.), Rotterdam (The Netherlands), and Bruges (Belgium).
- **Star Clippers:** For off-the-beaten path cruising, we like itineraries like their 7-day Italy/Malta round-trip from Civitavecchia/ Rome, with port calls in Mazarades Vallo, Syracuse, Panarea, and Ventotene (Italy), and Valletta (Malta).

12 Best Adventure Itineraries

- **Lindblad Expeditions:** Europe is not traditionally an adventure destination, but Special Expeditions has made inroads, including its soft-adventure experience in the British Isles.

13 Best Ports

- **Overall:** There are so many great ports in Europe it's hard to choose, but Fran's personal favorite is **Venice,** a city where every view is museum-quality. Jerry's is **London,** which he says is the greatest city in the world; it is visited by small ships (or you can get there on excursion from other ports including Southampton and Dover).
- **For Ancient History:** You can't top Athens or Rome and the ancient cities of Ephesus in Turkey and Pompeii in Italy.
- **For Shopping:** Fran heads to the French Riviera (Nice, Cannes, and Monaco) or ports in Italy (including Venice). Jerry hates to shop.
- **For Fun:** The French Riviera offers great art museums and, of course, beaches. Fun times can be

had in Copenhagen, home of the famous Tivoli Gardens amusement park; and Amsterdam, a youthful city and happening place.
- **For Quaintness:** It's hard to beat Portofino, Italy.
- **For Drama:** The most dramatic port scene has to be Santorini, Greece.
- **Other Faves:** Barcelona is looking awful spiffy since it was fixed up for the 1992 Olympic Games; Lisbon is a perpetual favorite; and Istanbul's exotic (yet crowded) ambience always impresses. Bergen, Norway, is a surprise with its excellent museums and historic waterfront, and Edinburgh and Dublin offer the best of the British Isles (except for London).

14 Best Shore Excursions

- **Medieval walled cities:** St-Paul-de-Vence or Eze (France), Lindos on Rhodes (Greece), and Mdina (Malta) all offer cobblestone streets and quaint homes located on hilltops with gorgeous ocean views—and art galleries and other shopping options to boot.
- **City tours:** If you are at one of the ports close to London, Paris, Berlin, Rome, or Florence, take the shore excursion (or at the very least the bus transfer) to explore the city.
- **Ephesus, Turkey:** For ancient history, nothing beats Ephesus, the ancient city found under a mountain near Kuşadasi, Turkey.
- **Pompeii, Italy:** Tour this once-prosperous ancient city of 20,000, which was buried when Vesuvius erupted in A.D. 79. Today, nearly two-thirds of the city have been excavated, and the ruins are amazing.
- **Excursions from St. Petersburg, Russia:** In Russia, you can't tour without a visa unless you book a shore excursion. The best are the summer palaces of Peterhof or Pushkin, or the Hermitage (Winter Palace).
- **Nordkapp, Norway:** The excursion to the North Cape (Nordkapp), Norway, gives you the chance to see the northernmost accessible point in Europe.



Part 1

Planning, Booking & Preparing for Your Cruise

With advice on choosing and booking your ideal cruise and tips on getting ready for the cruise experience.

1 Choosing Your Ideal Cruise

2 Booking Your Cruise & Getting the Best Price

3 Things to Know Before You Go

4 The Cruise Experience

1

Choosing Your Ideal Cruise

There are many things you should consider before plunking down big bucks for the perfect European cruise. What kind of itinerary are you looking for and when do you want to go? What size ship will make you most comfortable and will its age matter? What special things should you know if you are a family traveler, a honeymooner, or a person with disabilities? European cruises come in all different styles to suit all different tastes, so the first step in ensuring that you'll have the best possible vacation is matching your expectations to the appropriate itinerary and ship. In this chapter, we'll explore the differences between your various European cruise options.

1 The European Cruise Season

The European cruise season is generally considered to be April to November, although some lines operate into December, and even year-round in the Mediterranean. April, early May, and November/December are considered shoulder season, and lower fares are usually offered during these months. High season is the summer months.

If you are considering traveling in the shoulder season, keep in mind that some visitor facilities will operate during more limited hours, and some—say, in the Greek Isles—may not be open at all. The least expensive cruises are typically the first and last runs of the season, though these have their own charm: Specifically, you'll avoid the big tourist crush, which can really make a difference in some port towns. During the high season in Venice, for instance, you can't swing a stick without hitting a family from Duluth.

WEATHER

Europe is a continent of distinct seasons, but, just as in the U.S., there can be great variations in temperature from one part to another. The warmest months are July and August. August is the month when many Europeans go on vacation, and when beaches and other resort facilities will be particularly packed.

Here's the typical summer weather you can expect to encounter by region:

- **Britain & Ireland** Average temperatures in the low- to mid-60s (high teens Celsius), although weather may be milder in Ireland. August, September, and October tend to be the sunniest months.
- **Scandinavia** Average temperatures above the Arctic Circle in the mid-50s (13 Celsius); in the south, in the 70s (low 20s Celsius), with Denmark tending to be the mildest. It may be rainy in the fjords.
- **Holland & Belgium** Average temperatures in the high 60s in Holland and Germany (about 20 Celsius), with possible rain in May; in the low 70s in Belgium (low 20s Celsius), with the sunniest weather in July and August.

What Time Is It?

Want to know what time it is at home? Based on U.S. Eastern Standard Time, Britain, Ireland, and Portugal are 5 hours ahead, Greece and Estonia are 7 hours ahead, and western Russia is 8 hours ahead. The rest of the countries in this book are 6 hours ahead. The European countries observe daylight savings time, but not necessarily starting or ending on the same day or in the same month as in the U.S.

- **France** Average temperatures in the mid-70s (mid-20s Celsius) in Paris; can be in high 80s or above (30s Celsius) on the Riviera.
- **The Baltics** Average temperatures in the 70s (20s Celsius), with the best weather in late summer.
- **Italy, Greece, Spain, Portugal & Turkey** Temperatures in the high 80s or higher (30s Celsius), but there may be nice breezes along the coast. Portugal tends to be cooler, more like mid-70s (20s Celsius), but also rainier. Greece and Turkey are the hottest, and if you're not a hot-weather lover, you're better off visiting these countries in mid-April to June or mid-September to the end of October.

2 European Cruise Itineraries

There's really no such thing as a standard European itinerary. Instead, the cruises focus on specific regions and sometimes more than one region. And there are many variations on each theme. A cruise of the Norwegian fjords, for instance, may depart from Bergen, Norway. Or it may depart from London or Copenhagen.

TYPICAL CRUISE ITINERARIES

The Greek Isles/Eastern Mediterranean The Aegean Sea and sometimes the Adriatic as well, with port calls in the Greek islands (Rhodes, Santorini, Mykonos, and so on), Athens, Kuşadasi, Turkey, and sometimes Istanbul. Some of the cruises also visit Dubrovnik or other ports in Croatia.

Western Mediterranean The area from Barcelona or Lisbon to Rome and including port calls in Spain, France, and Italy.

The Rivieras The French Riviera (with ports such as St-Tropez), Monte Carlo, and small Italian Riviera ports (such as Portofino). May also include Rome.

Scandinavia & Russia The Baltic Sea; Copenhagen, Denmark; Stockholm, Sweden; Helsinki, Finland; Tallinn, Estonia; and St. Petersburg, Russia. May also include Oslo.

The British Isles England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland, and sometimes France; sailing in the North Sea, Irish Sea, and English Channel.

Norway & the Fjords Norway from Bergen up to Honningsvag and the North Cape.

The Black Sea/Middle East The area from Athens or Istanbul to Yalta, with port calls in Bulgaria, Romania, and the Ukraine. Europe cruises may also be combined with the Red Sea (Egypt and Israel).

SPECIAL ITINERARIES

THE BEST OF EUROPE One of the best ways to see Europe if you've never been here before is on one of the 2-week cruises that visit the major cities. These cruises tend to combine aspects of the above itineraries to give passengers a comprehensive (albeit quick) look at Europe. An example is Holland America's 14-day Northern Europe Capitals cruise from Copenhagen to Rome/Civitavecchia, which visits Oslo (Norway), Antwerp (Belgium), Le Havre/Paris (France), Lisbon (Portugal), Barcelona (Spain), and Monte Carlo, among other ports.

And there are some Grand Mediterranean–type sailings like Princess' 12-day Med: from Venice to Barcelona, with port calls in Monte Carlo (Monaco), Livorno and Naples (Italy), Athens (Greece), and Kuşadasi and Istanbul (Turkey). You can extend your stay with hotel nights in Venice and Barcelona.

RIVER CRUISES Europe's inland waterways offer a wealth of cruise opportunities on smaller vessels specifically designed for river and canal travel, including luxurious barges that ply the waterways of inland France, Holland, Ireland, Belgium, and England, offering a close-up view of the local culture.

There are also larger river ships in France, Holland, Belgium, Germany, Austria, and the former Soviet counties, as well as in Italy and Portugal.

COMPARING ITINERARIES

LENGTH OF CRUISE

In choosing a region or regions to visit, you will obviously have to consider the length of cruise you want to take. Itineraries in Europe range from a few days to several weeks. The shortest cruises, **3- and 4-day offerings,** can be found mostly in the Greek Isles and on inland waterways. Norwegian Coastal Voyages also does 5- and 6-day cruises in Norway. **One-week cruises** are regularly offered in the Greek Isles/Eastern Mediterranean, in the Western Mediterranean, in the British Isles, in Norway, in the French and Italian Rivieras, and on Europe's inland waterways. There are also 1-week sailings in the Baltics and other regions. But more common in most parts of Europe are **10- and 12-day cruises.** The longest cruise itineraries include several different regions.

TIME IN PORT & TIME AT SEA

It's important when comparing the various itineraries to make sure there will be enough time in port for what you came to see and do. Some ships even overnight in key ports such as Venice, Monte Carlo, or Istanbul to give you time to both explore and enjoy the local nightlife. Alternative ships may spend most evenings in port.

Keep in mind that visiting a port a day in an exciting region like Greece, where there are so many ancient sites to see, can be exhausting. And some of the ships make more than one port call a day. Experienced cruisers will know some of the most relaxing times to be had on ships are lazy days at sea, and consequently often choose an itinerary that spends a day or two without a port call.

MATCHING YOUR HABITS TO YOUR DESTINATION

Some ports are better for certain things than others. Here's a short rundown (see part 3, "The Ports of Call," for more detailed information).

PORTS FOR SHOPPERS

London, Paris, Rome, and all the other major cities; Nice and Cannes, France; Venice, Italy.

PORTS FOR BEACH LOVERS

Cannes and St-Tropez, France; Mykonos and Rhodes, Greece; Málaga and Palma, Spain.

PORTS FOR ANTIQUITIES

Kuşadasi, Turkey (Ephesus); Sorrento (Pompeii); Athens (the Parthenon); Rome (the Colosseum, and so on).

PORTS FOR NATURE BUFFS

Norway (especially above the Arctic Circle); British coastal areas.

SHORE EXCURSIONS: THE WHAT, WHY & HOW

No matter what size ship you're on or what its itinerary is, you can choose from a variety of shore excursions at any given port, ranging in price from around $30 to more than $200 per person. The most popular are city tours, which typically highlight the historic and scenic attractions in each port city. Other, pricier tours take you beyond the port city to inland attractions.

We enjoy exploring port cities on our own and take only those tours that go further inland, but that's just us. It's a personal choice.

On the big ships, excursions can sell out quickly, so don't dawdle if you know what you want; sign up before the trip (if the cruise line allows you to do so), or on the first or second day of the cruise. Because of the large numbers of passengers on large ships, be prepared for some waiting around as each jumbo-size tour group is herded from the ship to the waiting fleet of buses or minivans.

On smaller ships, there's usually room on the excursions to accommodate all passengers on board, and the excursions may even be included in your cruise fare (in which case 100% attendance is not uncommon). The whole process is saner, and group sizes are most likely smaller.

Whatever the size of the ship, the attraction itself, quality of the tour guide, and execution of the tour are what determine whether you have an enjoyable time.

In chapter 2, we list the pros and cons of taking shore excursions, and in chapters 11 and 12, we list both the best shore excursions and the top sights you can see on your own.

Indulging Your Obsessions at Sea

Cruise lines are always looking for more ways to attract passengers with unique onboard activities, and hence, the creation of theme cruises. **Crystal,** for instance, features an annual series of food and wine cruises where well-known chefs and sommeliers conduct demonstrations and tastings on board. **Holland America** does an annual big-band cruise on a transatlantic sailing from Europe. **Radisson Seven Seas** has cruises themed on antiques and the arts, as well as cruises where Le Cordon Bleu chefs offer workshops. **Silversea** has designated sailings where visiting chefs are present, as well as special wine sailings that include lectures, tastings, and guided tours of wineries, as well as golf cruises with play at noted courses. While **Cunard** no longer offers the full roster of theme cruises it once did, on the *Queen Mary 2* the line does feature an extensive educational program that includes workshops led by graduates of the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts (a little Shakespeare anyone?).

3 Choosing Your Ship

After choosing your itinerary, picking the right ship is the number-one factor in ensuring you get the vacation you're looking for. As we've said, cruise ships operating in Europe range from **small alternative-type vessels** to **resortlike megaships,** with the cruise experience varying widely depending on the type of ship you select. There are casual cruises and luxury cruises; educational cruises where you attend lectures; soft adventure cruises that explore remote areas and offer watersports opportunities; and resortlike cruises where massages and Las Vegas–style shows are the order of the day.

You'll need to decide what overall cruise experience you want. Type of cruise is even more important than price. After all, what kind of bargain is a party cruise if what you're looking for is a quiet time? Your fantasy vacation may be someone else's nightmare, and vice versa.

BIG SHIP OR SMALL?

When comparing ship sizes, think of the difference between a small New England inn and a big resort hotel in Miami. A ship's size, like that of a hotel, greatly determines its personality and the kind of vacation you'll have. Big ships tend to be busy, exciting affairs, while the smaller ships are most often low-key retreats with unique personalities.

THE BIG SHIPS

Big ships operating in Europe vary in size and scope, and include everything from classic cruise ships to massive new megaships. They all offer a comfortable cruising experience, with virtual armies of service employees overseeing your well-being. Ship stabilizers assure smooth sailing and all have plenty of deck space from which you can take in the coastal sights.

Due to their deeper drafts (the amount of ship below the waterline), the biggest of the big ships can't get to some of the islands and small ports that smaller ships may visit. However, the more powerful engines on these ships allow them to visit more ports during each trip, and shore excursions allow you more closely to explore different aspects of the port's history and culture. (A downside, however, is that disembarkation at ports can be a lengthy process because there are so many passengers wanting to visit the ports.)

The itineraries of these ships tend to be the tried-and-true routes sailed by many other vessels.

The classic-style ships (some of which are really midsize in today's market) embrace their nautical history and don't look as much like floating Hyatt hotels as the bigger megaships (see below). Classic-style ships may be older vessels (and some tattered ones at that) or they may be modern ships designed to appeal to those who don't want everything quite so big and glitzy. These ships, operated by both European and American companies, range from budget to luxurious. On the more expensive of these ships, the crowd will be older and more refined, and take formal nights seriously. On the more moderately priced ships in Europe you'll find lots of middle-class Europeans and family travelers (as well as value-conscious Americans) and generally a more casual atmosphere.

Megaships are newer, are bigger (the biggest ship in Europe holds more than 2,600 passengers), and offer the latest and greatest. They're glitzy American-style floating resorts and, with the exception of those operated by Costa, attract more Americans than Europeans. The atmosphere is casual during the day, with a few formal nights so you can really put on the ritz.

Both the classic-style ships and the megaships have all the facilities you can imagine on a cruise ship. There are swimming pools, health clubs, spas (of various sizes), nightclubs, movie theaters, shops, casinos, bars, and children's playrooms. In some cases—especially on the megaships—you'll also find sports decks, virtual golf, computer rooms, and cigar clubs, as well as quiet spaces where you can get away from it all. There are so many rooms you won't likely feel claustrophobic.

These ships have big dining rooms and buffet areas serving more food with more variety and at more times (including midnight) than you can think about, much less eat. There might also be additional eating venues such as pizzerias, hamburger grills, ice-cream parlors, alternative restaurants, wine bars, champagne bars, caviar bars, and patisseries.

In most cases, these ships have lots of onboard activities to keep you occupied when you're not in port, including games and contests, classes, children's programs, and lectures (possibly by archaeologists and historians). The activities are somewhat lower key than they would be in, say, the Caribbean, where the crowd is more party-hearty. These ships also offer a variety of entertainment options that might even include celebrity headline acts, and usually feature stage show productions, some quite sophisticated (particularly on ships run by American companies).

Cabins, in many cases, offer modern comforts such as TVs and telephones, and some even have personal safes and minibars. The cabins themselves might be cubbyholes or large suites, depending on the ship and the cabin level you book. On most of these ships, options will include picture windows and private verandas.

These ships carry a lot of people, and as such can at times feel crowded—and there may occasionally be lines at the buffets and in other public areas. On the other hand, you aren't stuck with the same faces for your whole cruise.

THE SMALL & ALTERNATIVE SHIPS

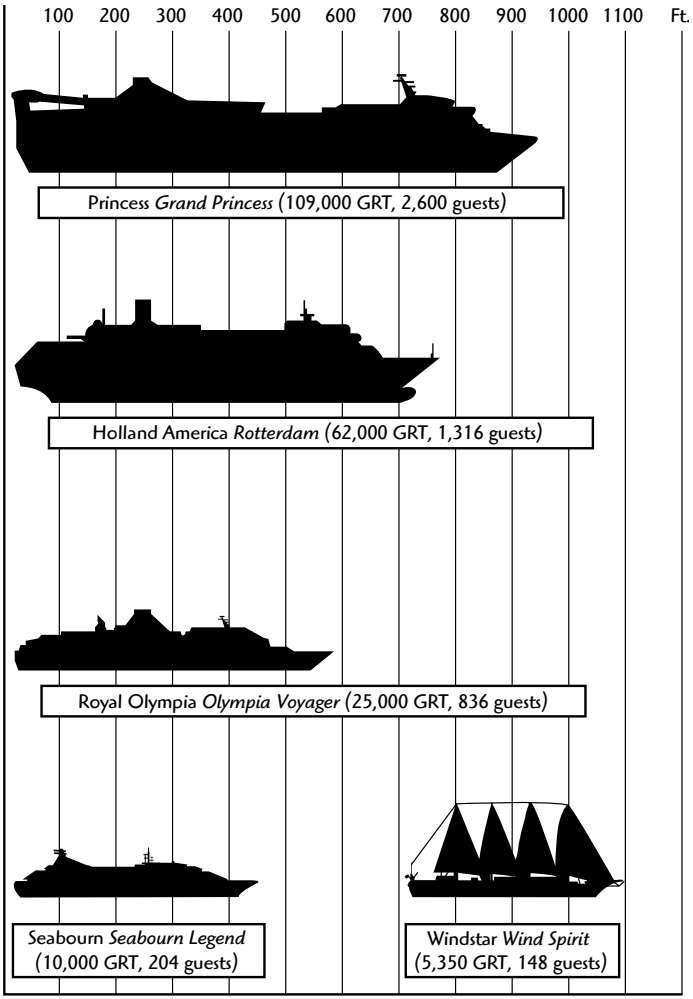
Just as big cruise ships are mostly for people who want every resort amenity, small or alternative ships are best suited for people who prefer a casual, crowd-free cruise experience that gives them a chance to get up-close-and-personal with Europe's coastal offerings.

Thanks to their smaller size, these ships can offer a yachtlike experience (some of them even have sails) and can go places that larger ships can't, such as islands and smaller ports that cater mostly to yachts and small fishing vessels. The decks on these ships are closer to the waterline, too, giving passengers a more intimate view than from the high decks of the large cruise ships. These ships tend to hug the coast, and in Europe they usually visit a port a day (although some spend a day or two at sea exploring areas of natural beauty).

The alternative ship experience comes with a sense of adventure, although it's usually adventure of a soft rather than rugged sort, and offers a generally casual cruise experience: There are usually no dress-up nights, the food may be rather simply prepared, and because there are so few public areas to choose from—usually only one or two small lounges—camaraderie tends to develop more quickly between passengers on these ships than aboard larger vessels, which can be as anonymous as a big city.

Cabins may not offer TVs or telephones and tend to be very small, and in some cases downright spartan. Meals are generally served in a single, open seating, and dress codes are usually nonexistent.

SHIP SIZE COMPARISONS


100 200 300 400 500 600 700 800 900 1000 1100 Ft.
Princess *Grand Princess* (109,000 GRT, 2,600 guests)
Holland America *Rotterdam* (62,000 GRT, 1,316 guests)
Royal Olympia *Olympia Voyager* (25,000 GRT, 836 guests)
Seabourn *Seabourn Legend* (10,000 GRT, 204 guests)
Windstar *Wind Spirit* (5,350 GRT, 148 guests)

Ships selected for this chart are representative of the various size vessels sailing in Europe for 2004. See the specifications tables accompanying every ship review in chapters 5 to 9 to see the approximate comparative size of all the ships not shown here. (GRT = gross register tons, a measure that takes into account interior space used to produce revenue on a vessel. One GRT = 100 cubic feet of enclosed, revenue-generating space.)

Leading Websites for Cruise Planning

Check out the cruise line sites for tons of information on their products. Some are amazing, giving you everything from their ships' itineraries and prices to virtual tours. Be aware, though, that not all cruise lines accept bookings on their sites, preferring that you make your actual reservation through a travel agent (see more in chapter 2).

This aside, the cruise line sites (listed in chapters 5–9 in the individual cruise line reviews) will give you some great visual reference points, and the following independent sites can provide other valuable information as you plan your cruise.

- **www.cruising.org** Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA), the U.S. cruise industry's marketing arm, maintains a website that lists CLIA-affiliated travel agencies, links to the member cruise lines, and more.
- **www.cdc.gov/travel/cruiships.htm** Twice each year, the Centers for Disease Control's Vessel Sanitation Program rates sanitary conditions aboard all ships that have foreign itineraries and carry 13 or more passengers. Access this link for the latest test results. (***Note:*** because the CDC is a U.S. agency, some ships in this book won't be rated in their listings.) You can also find general travel health information for the destinations you are visiting at the CDC travel website, www.cdc.gov/travel.
- Online cruise magazines **Cruisecritic.com** (AOL keyword "Cruise Critic") and **Cruisemates.com** both offer ship reviews, updated cruise news, useful tips, chat opportunities, message boards, and postings of cruise bargains.

Instead of aerobics and pool games (featured on the big ships), these ships may offer a brisk walk around the deck or, on some ships, the opportunity to enjoy watersports right from the ship. And the alternative ships more frequently feature expert lectures on archaeology, history, and other intellectual pursuits.

There are no stabilizers on most of these smaller ships, and the ride can be bumpy in open water. There are also often no elevators, making cruises on most of these ships a bit difficult for travelers with disabilities. And the alternative ship lines do not offer specific activities or facilities for children, although you still may find a few families on some of these vessels.

4 Matching the Cruise to Your Needs

CRUISES FOR FAMILIES

European cruises have become increasingly popular with families, including intergenerational gatherings: parents traveling with their kids and the grandparents, too. The lines are responding with youth counselors and supervised programs, fancy playrooms, and even video game rooms to keep the kids entertained while their parents relax. At night, most ships offer babysitting (for an extra charge). Some lines offer reduced rates for kids, though it's important to note that most lines discourage passengers from bringing infants.

ACTIVITIES Ask whether a supervised program will be offered when you plan to cruise; sometimes such programs are only operated if there are a certain number of kids on board. Depending on the program, the youngest children may frolic in toy- and game-stocked playrooms, listen to stories, and go on treasure hunts; older kids have options like arts and crafts, computer games, lip-synch competitions, pool games, and volleyball; and teenagers can mingle at teen parties or hang out at the video arcade. The megas have large playrooms with computer stations and video games as well as shelves of toys. There's usually a TV showing movies throughout the day and, for the younger ones, there are ball bins and plastic jungle gyms. Many megaships have shallow kiddie pools, sometimes sequestered on an isolated patch of deck.

BABYSITTING Babysitting is offered on most large cruise ships from around 8pm to 2am. Private in-cabin babysitting by a crew member is a steep $10 per hour for two kids (and there may be a 4-hr. minimum). There may also be a group babysitting option.

FAMILY-FRIENDLY CABINS A family of four can share a cabin that has bunk-style third and fourth berths, which pull out of the walls just above the pair of regular beds (some even have a fifth berth), but there's no two ways to

Kids Family Cruising Tips

Here are some suggestions for smoother sailing on your family cruise.

- **Ask about children's amenities.** Check in advance with the cruise line to make sure the ship you're sailing offers things your child might need. Are cribs available? Children's menus?
- **Pack some basic first-aid supplies plus any medications your doctor may suggest, and even a thermometer.** Cruise lines have limited supplies of these items (and charge for them, too) and can quickly run out if the ship has many families aboard. If an accident should happen aboard, virtually every ship afloat has its own infirmary staffed by doctors and/or nurses. Keep in mind, first aid can usually be summoned more readily aboard ship than in port.
- **Warn younger children about the danger of falling overboard and make sure they know not to play on the railings.**
- **When in port, prearrange a meeting spot.** If your child is old enough to go off on his or her own, pick a meeting spot either on board or on land, and meet there well before the ship is scheduled to depart to make sure no one is still ashore.
- **Make sure your kids know their cabin number and what deck it's on.** The endless corridors and doors on the megas look exactly alike.
- **Prepare kids for TV letdown.** If your kids are TV addicts, you might want to make sure your cabin will have a TV and VCR. And even if it does, they should be prepared for a little bit of withdrawal, since televisions on ships just don't have 200 channels of cable—you'll be lucky to get five or eight channels. On the bright side, big ships are likely to have nightly movies and a video arcade.
- **Dress your kids appropriately.** It's annoying when you're in an evening gown for a formal night to bump into a kid in shorts.

slice it: A standard cabin with four people in it will be cramped. However, when you consider how little time you'll spend in the cabin, it's doable. The obvious incentive to share one cabin is the price: Whether children or adults, the rates for third and fourth people sharing a cabin with two full-fare (or even discounted) passengers are usually about half of the lowest regular rates. On occasion there are special deals and further discounts. If you can afford it, and if space equals sanity in your book, consider booking a suite, many of which have a pullout couch in the living room. Families with older kids can always consider booking two separate cabins with connecting doors. Lots of ships, big and small, have them. You'll be close to each other, but separate.

TAKING THE KIDS ON SMALL SHIPS The big new ships are certainly most prepared for families, but if your children are at least 10 or 12, some of the casual, alternative cruises can be loads of fun and educational to boot. While you won't find a kids' playroom stuffed with toys, the experience of visiting a culturally rich port of call every day or learning (on sailing vessels) about nautical knots and winches will help keep you and the kids from going stir-crazy on board.

CRUISES FOR SINGLE TRAVELERS

For singles, a nice thing about cruises is that you needn't worry about dining alone, since you'll be seated with other guests (if you don't want to be, seek a ship with alternative dining options). You also needn't worry much about finding people to talk to, since the general atmosphere on nearly all ships is very congenial and allows you to easily find conversation, especially during group activities. And the ship may even host a party to give singles a chance to get to know one another and/or offer social hosts as dance partners.

The downside is that you may have to pay more for the cruise experience than those sharing a room. Because cruise line rates are based on two people per cabin, some lines charge a "single supplement" rate (which sounds like a deal, but it's *you* who pays the supplement) that ranges from 110% to an outrageous 200% of the per-person, double-occupancy fare. As a single person, you have two choices: Find a line with a reasonable single supplement rate or ask if the line has a cabin-share program, under which the line will pair you with another single so you can get a lower fare. You may not be able to get much information about your roommate before the sailing, although all lines match gender and most also try to match age. Some lines also offer a single guarantee program, which means if they can't find you a roommate, they'll book you in a cabin alone but still honor the shared rate. On some older ships (including the QE2) and a few small ships, there are special cabins designated for single travelers, and in some cases they carry no additional charge. But keep in mind that these cabins, originally designed on the older ships for nannies or maids accompanying passengers, are really, really small, and that they tend to sell out fast.

To increase your chances of meeting other singles, book a cruise through a travel company that specializes in bringing singles together. These companies include **Cruiseman** (✆ **800/805-0053;** www.cruiseman.com) and **Discount Travel Club** (✆ **800/393-5000;** www.singlecruise.com). Such firms coordinate groups of as few as 30 or as many as 300 singles on specific sailings, and typically have a tour coordinator on board to organize mixers and make sure people get a chance to meet. Singles in these groups tend to be in their 30s to 50s (of course, some may be younger or older).

CRUISES FOR TRAVELERS WITH DISABILITIES

Cruise lines, due in no small part to public pressure, have made an effort in recent years to make their ships more accessible to travelers with disabilities. It is not uncommon on the newest ships to find two dozen or more wheelchair-accessible cabins with such features as wide doors, handrails, and low sinks. Other additions include Braille on handrails and in elevators, and cabin alarms designed for the hearing impaired.

On older ships, however, the shipboard experience remains a struggle. You may encounter doors that are too narrow and other frustrations such as entranceways with lips (to prevent flooding). You may even find that some public rooms are simply not accessible. And smaller ships might not have elevators, much less accessible cabins.

If you are a traveler with a disability, it is important to let the cruise line know your special needs when you make your booking. If you use a wheelchair, you'll need to know if wheelchair-accessible cabins are available (and how they're equipped), as well as whether public rooms are accessible and can be reached by elevator; I've noted this information in the cabin sections of the ship reviews in chapters 5 to 9. Be aware that the cruise line may also have special policies regarding travelers with disabilities—for instance, some require that you be accompanied by an able-bodied companion.

Travelers with disabilities should also inquire when they're booking whether the ship docks at ports or uses tenders (small boats) to go ashore. Tenders cannot always accommodate wheelchairs. Also, once on board, travelers with disabilities will want to seek the advice of the tour staff before choosing shore excursions, as not all will be wheelchair-friendly.

If you have a chronic health problem, we advise you to check with your doctor before booking the cruise, and, if you have any specific needs, to notify the cruise line in advance. This will ensure that the medical team on the ship is properly prepared to offer assistance.

A handful of experienced travel agencies specialize in booking cruises and tours for travelers with disabilities. **Accessible Journeys,** 35 W. Sellers Ave., Ridley Park, PA 19078 (✆ **800/846-4537;** www.disabilitytravel.com), publishes a newsletter and can even provide licensed healthcare professionals to accompany those who require aid.

CRUISES FOR GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELERS

There are a number of gay-friendly cruises and special charter sailings for gay men and lesbians in Europe. For details, contact these specialists:

- **RSVP Cruises,** 2800 University Ave. SE, Minneapolis, MN 55414 (✆ **800/328-7787;** www.rsvp.net)
- **Pied Piper Travel,** 330 W. 42nd St., Ste. 1804, New York, NY 10036 (✆ **800/TRIP-312;** www.piedpiper.com)
- **Olivia Cruises and Resorts,** 4400 Market St., Oakland, CA 94608 (✆ **800/631-6277;** www.oliviacruises.com); caters specifically to lesbians

You can also contact the **International Gay & Lesbian Travel Association,** 52 W. Oakland Park Blvd., no. 237, Wilton Manors, FL 33311 (✆ **800/448-8550;** www.iglta.org), which has more than 1,000 travel industry members. You might want to check out ***Frommer's Gay & Lesbian Europe,*** the well-known ***Out & About*** travel newsletter ($39 print, $20 electronic for 1 year; to subscribe call ✆ **800/929-2268** or visit www.outandabout.com), or ***Our World*** travel

magazine ($25 a year by mail, $12 online; to subscribe, call ✆ **386/441-5604** or visit www.ourworldpublishing.com), for articles, tips, and listings on gay and lesbian travel.

HONEYMOON CRUISES

Most 1-week cruises depart on either Saturday or Sunday, although there are some exceptions. You'll want to look carefully at sailing times as you plan your wedding weekend. You will also want to make sure that the ship offers double, queen-, or king-size beds, and you may want to book a cabin with a tub or Jacuzzi. Rooms with private verandas are particularly romantic. You can take in the sights in privacy, and even enjoy a private meal, assuming the veranda is big enough for a table and chairs (some are not) and that the weather doesn't turn chilly. If you want to dine alone each night, make sure that the dining room offers tables for two and/or that the ship offers room service (your travel agent can fill you in on these matters). You may also want to inquire as to the likelihood that there will be other honeymooners your age on the ship. Some ships—among them those of Princess, Royal Caribbean, Costa, Celebrity, and Holland America—offer add-on honeymoon packages that provide champagne, a fruit basket, and the like. Most lines will offer special perks, like an invitation to a private honeymooners' cocktail party, if you let them know in advance that you will be celebrating your special event on the ship.

High-end lines, such as Windstar, Radisson Seven Seas, Seabourn, Silversea, Cunard, and Crystal, don't offer special cocktail parties, but their ultra-deluxe amenities are especially pleasing to honeymooners. From terrycloth bathrobes and slippers that await you in walk-in closets to whirlpool bathtubs, five-course dinners served in your cabin, stocked minibars, and high crew-to-passenger ratios (meaning more personalized service), extra-special touches are business as usual on these upscale lines.

Weddings at Sea

Cruise ship captains generally only conduct marriage ceremonies in movies and on television. Princess' *Grand Princess* and *Star Princess* are exceptions. Each has its own wedding chapel and a captain who is willing and able to lead the proceedings. And your friends back home can even watch the ceremony via the Internet thanks to the line's special Wedding Cam. Princess offers wedding packages that include a ceremony, flowers, music, cake, champagne, and other niceties, priced from $1,400 (plus your cruise fare). Keep in mind that you will need to make the ceremony and party arrangements and get a license in advance (a spur-of-the-moment wedding at sea is another thing that only exists on movies and television).

Already married? Check out the line's romantic vow-renewal-at-sea packages.

2

Booking Your Cruise & Getting the Best Price

Cruise prices are not always the easiest things to figure out, and cruises in Europe can run you big bucks; however, the first important rule to remember is that **few people pay full price.** The retail price quoted in the brochure is the optimum price the cruise line hopes to get for the cruise—like the sticker price on a new car—rather than the price it really expects to get. There are all sorts of deals out there, and virtually all the lines offer early-booking discounts, which can offer huge savings if you book at least 3 months in advance of your sailing date. The best way to find the best deals is through an experienced cruise travel agent.

In this chapter, we'll point you in the right direction for finding the best fare, keeping costs down, and choosing a good agent, and clue you in on what's included in your "all-inclusive" fare and what's not. We'll also provide some guidance about choosing a cabin and dining-room seating time.

1 The Scoop on Cruise Fares

FINDING THE BEST FARE

The best way to save on a European cruise is to **book in advance.** Cruise itineraries are usually printed 10 to 12 months ahead of the season, so there's ample time to find the right cruise; most lines offer early-bird discounts that generally amount to 10% to 50% off but sometimes reach as high as 60% (for a limited number of cabin types). Policies for the rates also vary, but generally you have a good chance of qualifying for the deals (which are offered in limited numbers on a first-come, first-served basis) by booking at least 3 months in advance (though some cabin categories may even sell out 6–9 months in advance). If cabins aren't selling, the lines may even extend the early-booking deadlines closer in to the sailing dates.

Booking early gives you the advantage of getting first pick on cabins (the cheapest and most expensive ones tend to sell out first). And, if you are booking your own air, you have a better chance of getting a deal from the airlines.

If cabins are still not filled up as the season begins, the cruise lines will start marketing **last-minute deals,** usually through their top-producing travel agents. One couple we heard about booked a last-minute 12-day Princess Mediterranean cruise for $599 per person last year. Keep in mind, though, that last-minute deals require a certain amount of flexibility. Your desired sailing date may sell out, and even if it doesn't, you will have to take whatever cabin is still available. Also, you may have trouble getting a good last-minute deal on your airfare (our friends ended up adding on $800 each for air). And most last-minute deals are non-refundable. You can also save by booking a cruise in the **shoulder months** of April, early May, and November or early December, when

Price Protection

It's a little-known fact that if the price of your cabin category goes down after you've booked it, some cruise lines will make up the difference, in effect giving you the lowest rates. The cruise lines won't call you with this information, but a diligent travel agent will monitor the rates and contact the cruise line for you if the rates go down.

pricing is usually less than in the summer peak season. For lines that operate in Europe year-round, winter, with the exception of the Christmas and New Year's holiday periods, is bargain time.

And keep in mind that the lines also tend to offer cut rates when they are **introducing a new ship or new itinerary** in a market. So it pays to keep track of what's happening in the industry—or to have your agent do so. You should be aware, though, that several new ships have experienced construction delays and have had to cancel their maiden voyages and inaugural sailings, sometimes only weeks ahead of time. Of course, passengers on those cancelled sailings were well compensated with refunds, big discounts on their rebooked cruise, and the like, but if you want to try a brand-new ship, some flexibility may be required.

STANDARD SAVINGS FOR THIRD & FOURTH PASSENGERS

Most ships offer standard discounts for third and/or fourth passengers sharing a cabin with two full-fare passengers. These discounts are designed for families and others who don't mind the closeness sharing a cabin brings. Generally, the first two in a cabin are booked at a regular fare, with the third and fourth passengers booked at a highly discounted rate. If you are four adults traveling together, you can add the four rates together and divide by four to get your per-person fare.

Some lines offer **special rates for kids,** usually on a seasonal or select-sailings basis, that may include free or discounted airfare. Kids under age 2 usually cruise for free.

GROUP RATES

One of the best ways to get a cruise deal is to book as a group (generally at least 16 people in a minimum of 8 cabins), so you may want to get a family reunion together or convince your friends or colleagues that they need a vacation, too. The savings include not only a discounted rate, but at the least, the cruise portion of the 16th ticket will be free (on some upscale ships you can negotiate a free ticket for groups of eight or more). The gang can split the proceeds from the free ticket, or, just for the fun of it, hold a drawing for the ticket, maybe at a cocktail party on the first night. If your group is large enough, you may be able to get that cocktail party—or perhaps some other onboard amenities—for free as well.

SENIOR DISCOUNTS

Seniors may be able to get extra savings on their cruise. Some lines will take 5% off the top for those 55 and up, and the senior rate applies even if the second person in the cabin is younger. Membership in groups such as AARP is not required, but may bring additional savings.

Tour operators who sell cruise packages to seniors may book blocks of cabins and offer group discounts. One well-known operator is **Grand Circle Travel,** 347 Congress St., Boston, MA 02210 (✆ **800/955-1034** or 617/350-7500;

www.gct.com). You can write to them for a free booklet called "101 Tips for the Mature Traveler."

GOOD DEALS FOR THOSE WHO CAN'T GET ENOUGH

If you've been on a cruise before and are traveling with the same line, you may qualify for a **repeat-passenger discount** or other perks. Policies vary by line, but repeat-passenger discounts generally range from 5% to 20% (you may have to take several cruises to qualify); past passengers might also get invitations to private shipboard cocktail parties, priority check-in, and cabin upgrades (and nearly every line sends its repeaters enticing direct-mail pieces). ***Note:*** If you sail on any of Carnival Corporation's lines, which include Carnival, Costa, Cunard, Holland America Line, Princess, Seabourn, and Windstar, you can qualify for a repeat-passenger discount on a sister line.

If you want to visit more than one region, you can usually get a good deal by booking two cruises **back-to-back** (you stay on the ship for more than one sailing).

Or, if you like your European cruise so much you decide to do it again next year, consider **booking another cruise** while you are on the ship. Cruise lines, making the most of their captive audiences, may pitch you to make future vacation plans while still on board, with discounts—usually 5%. Before you sign on the dotted line, though, make sure the on-the-spot discount can be combined with other offers you might find later. Also, be aware, if you do choose to book on board, you can still do the reconfirmation and ticketing through your travel agent by giving the cruise line his or her name.

MORE DEALS

Cruise lines market European cruises with **free hotel stays** and, in some cases, **free airfare** offers. You may also see **two-for-one deals** or offers that tack a few **free days** on to a cruise (such as 14 days for the price of 12). Be sure to evaluate these deals carefully by adding up the total amount you would spend with the line for your cruise, hotel, and airfare and comparing it to offers by competing lines. Make sure you are comparing apples and apples.

Repositioning cruises, such as when a ship repositions from the western Mediterranean to the Greek Isles, may be value-priced. Because these cruises tend to cover greater distances than standard cruises, they usually offer more days at sea and last longer than 1 week. On these cruises you get to see more than one region, which is a particular advantage to those trying to see as much of Europe as possible.

Some of the more upscale lines will reward customers willing to **pay their full fare in advance** (thus giving the cruise line cash in hand). The discounts—sometimes as much as 15%—are significant enough that it could pay to go this route rather than putting a comparable sum in a CD.

AIRFARE & PRE- AND POST-CRUISE OFFERINGS

Your cruise package might include airfare, but if not, you will be offered an air add-on. As a general rule, if you are offered air transportation from the cruise line, it's best to take it. Why? First of all, as big customers of the airlines, cruise lines tend to get very good (if not the best) discounted airfare rates, which they pass on to their customers.

Secondly, booking air with the cruise line also allows the line to keep track of you. If your plane is late, for instance, they might even hold the boat. And most cruise lines include **transfers** from the airport to the ship, saving you the hassle

of getting a cab. (If you do book on your own, you may still be able to get the transfers separately—ask your travel agent.)

The only time it may pay to book your own air transportation is if you are using frequent-flier miles and can get the air for free. Also, book your own if you are particular about which carrier you fly or route you take (you are more or less at the mercy of the cruise lines to make these choices if you take their air offers, and may end up on chartered aircraft).

Some lines offer special **deviation programs,** which allow you to request specific airlines and routing for an extra fee. The deadline for these requests is usually 60 days prior to the sailing date or the day your cruise reservation is made if you book later.

Be aware that once the ticket is issued by the cruise line, you will be charged a fee if any changes are made.

If you choose not to book your air transportation with the cruise line, and said airfare is part of the cruise deal, you will be refunded the air portion of the fare.

Note: If you are not booking airfare through the cruise line, make sure to allow several hours between the plane's arrival and when you need to get on the ship. It may be best, in terms of reducing anxiety anyway, to arrive a day before and spend the night in a hotel.

PRE- & POST-CRUISE PACKAGES

All sorts of add-on programs are offered by the cruise lines in Europe, and many people will want to stretch their cruise vacation by adding a hotel stay, before or after the cruise, in a port city. These hotel stays are typically booked at the same time you book your cruise to create what's known as pre-cruise or post-cruise offerings.

Just like air add-ons, the cruise lines negotiate **special deals with hotels** at port cities. An advantage to coming in a day or two early is that you don't have to worry if your flight is running late—you won't miss the boat. Plus, the extra evening gives you time to recover from jet lag before your cruise begins.

Some lines, including Orient Lines, include a hotel package in the cruise fare. When evaluating a cruise line's hotel offering, consider the following:

- does the offer include transfers (airport to hotel and hotel to cruise ship)?
- does the deal offer a hotel that you will be happy with in terms of location and room style?
- does the offer include escorted tours, car-rental deals, or meals?

CRUISETOURS

Most of the cruise lines also offer some **escorted land tours,** usually in major cities like London, Paris, Madrid, Lisbon, Venice, Athens, or Istanbul, to complement your cruise vacation.

The land portion is typically 4 to 6 nights and may be offered before or after the cruise. The package usually includes hotel accommodations, sightseeing, admission to attractions, and some meals, as well as ground transportation (usually by bus) and all transfers (between the airport, the hotel or hotels, and the ship).

2 Extra Costs to Consider

While your cruise price typically includes accommodations on the ship, meals and snacks, activities, and entertainment, there are some added costs that arise during your cruise; before your trip, you may want to make a tentative budget.

Additional expenses usually include shore excursions, bar drinks, dry cleaning and laundry services (some ships have coin-operated machines for passenger use as well), phone calls, massage and other spa services, beauty parlor services, photos taken by the ship's photographer, wine at dinner, babysitting, and souvenirs. Such extras can easily add up to $50 to $60 per person per day or more if you really indulge. Plus on most ships you are expected to tip the crew (see below).

SHORE EXCURSIONS

The most expensive addition to your cruise fare in Europe will likely be shore excursions. With some lines, shore excursions are included in your cruise fare, but with most lines they are an added (though very worthwhile) expense. Ranging from about $30 for a 3-hour city tour to more than $200 for a long excursion to a city far from the port, these sightseeing tours are designed to help cruise passengers make the most of their time at the destinations the ship visits, but they can add a hefty sum to your vacation costs. Sometimes, you'll actually be in port long enough to take more than one excursion.

Our advice? Don't discount the excursions on the basis of cost. Think about it this way: You probably don't get to Europe very often, so it would be a shame to limit your experience just to save a few bucks. We've highlighted the best of these tours in chapters 11 and 12.

In general, you get the biggest bang for your buck by taking tours that go beyond the port city (in many cases, it's easy to walk around the port city on your own).

Shore excursions are generally booked on board, not in advance, and you will have an opportunity on board to ask questions of the ship's tour staff, who will even offer lectures on the subject, before you make your decision. Keep in mind that popular tours sell out fast.

GRATUITIES

You'll want to add to your calculations tips for the ship's crew. Of course, tipping is at your own discretion—Holland America even makes a point of this, with their "no tipping required" policy—but with the cruise lines being so forthcoming with their tipping advice (they even have special envelopes and cheat sheets prepared to help you out), you'll feel like a crumb for not obliging.

Tipping is usually paid at the end of the cruise. Figure on about $10 per passenger per day for tipping the room steward ($3.50–$4), waiter ($3.50–$4), and busboy ($1.50–$2)—a total of about $70 for a 7-day cruise.

Additional tips to other personnel, such as the head waiter or maitre d', are at your discretion. Most lines automatically add 15% to bar bills, so you don't have to tip your bartender, though some people will slip a bartender they really like a few bucks at the end of the cruise anyway. You aren't asked to tip crew members who bring you room service or bring back your clean laundry, but you can if you want to (having a few dollar bills on hand is useful). On some European and small-ship lines, the crew pools tips, with the recommended contribution $10 to $12 per person, per day. Other lines suggest you pay your tip based on a percentage of what you paid for your cruise (usually 5%). Norwegian Cruise Line and Princess Cruises automatically add tips of $10 per passenger, per day to your shipboard account (you can adjust the amount up or down as you see fit). Some luxury lines, including Seven Seas, Seabourn, and Silversea, include tips in the cruise fare.

For more on tipping, see "Wrapping Up Your Cruise—Debarkation Concerns," in chapter 4, "The Cruise Experience."

What's Not Included in Your Cruise Fare

To help you calculate what you'll need to cover onboard costs, we've put together this chart. Please note that the values of the U.S. dollar, the Euro, and the British pound fluctuate.

	U.S. $	U.K. £	Euro €
Babysitting (per hr., for two kids)			
Private	$10	£6.60	8.70€
Group	$6–$8	£3.95–£5.30	5.20€–6.95€
Bar drinks			
Soda	$1.50–$2	£1–£1.30	1.30€–1.75€
Mixed drinks	$3.25–$5	£2.15–£3.30	2.80€–4.35€
Beer	$2.95–$3.95	£1.95–£2.60	2.55€–3.45€
Wine (per bottle)	$10–$300	£6.60–£198	8.70€–261€
Alternative dining (service charge)	$5–$25	£3.30–£16.50	4.35€–22€
Haircuts*			
Men's	$32	£21	28€
Women's	$57–$77	£38–£51	50€–67€
Massage (50 min.)*	$89–$109	£59–£72	77€–95€
Cruise line logo souvenirs	$3–$50	£2–£33	2.60€–44€
Dry cleaning (per item)	$2.50–$7.50	£1.65–£4.95	2.20€–6.50€
Phone calls (per min.)	$6.95–$16.95	£4.60–£11	6.10€–15€
Photos (5 × 7)	$6.95–$8.95	£4.60–£5.90	6.10€–7.85€
E-mail (per min.)	50¢–$1.50	£.35–£1	.45€–1.30€

**Standard prices of Steiner, which has contracts to provide spa and beauty services on most ships.*

DRINKS

Most ships charge extra for alcoholic beverages (including wine at dinner) and for soda. Noncarbonated soft drinks such as lemonade and iced tea are typically included in your cruise fare. Luxury lines may include wine with lunch and dinner, bar drinks, and an in-cabin bar setup in the cruise fare.

PORT CHARGES & OTHER FEES

Port charges, taxes, and other fees are usually included in your cruise fare but not always, and these charges can add as much as $200 per person onto the price of a European cruise. We've noted in the cruise reviews when ships do not include port charges and taxes in their rates.

PHONE CALLS FROM THE SHIP

Making phone calls from any ship is extremely expensive (up to $16.95 per min.), so you're much better off waiting until you're at a port. However, making calls from a port in Europe can also be tricky. You can bring along an AT&T, Sprint, or other **phone-service card** from home, but make sure you know the

local access number for the card in advance (you can call your phone service for the numbers for each country you will be visiting).

On some pay phones in Europe you can drop in a coin (in the local currency) to connect to your local access number, but others require the use of prepaid phone cards (not coins). In either case, you usually can't just pick up the receiver and dial the local number for your phone service, even if that number is toll-free. If the phone requires a prepaid card, you can buy one at a newsstand or tobacco shop. If you are using the prepaid card just to connect to your phone service's local number, buy the card in the smallest denomination available.

If you don't want to hassle with the prepaid cards or figuring out local coinage, we've found that most hotels will let you use a phone to call AT&T or your other phone service if you walk in and ask nicely (looking lost helps). They may charge you a small fee.

Another, more convenient, option is to bring along a worldwide cellular phone. If you don't own one, you can rent one from **Nextel/Cellhire** (✆ **800/753-8315;** www.nextel.com) for $8 a day, $99 a month, plus usage charges (usually 99¢–$2.39 per min. in Europe). With 48 hours' notice, the company will ship you the phone. Keep in mind that the phone is more likely to work when you are on land than when you are at sea.

OTHER ONBOARD COSTS

Cruise lines make a substantial amount of their revenue on board, meaning you'll find enticements at every turn (especially on the big ships)—from the friendly bar staff offering the drink of the day (the largest source of onboard revenue for the cruise lines is drinks), to the roving photographer snapping that must-have photo, to the glass snow globe with the cruise ship inside.

There may be additional extras as well, depending on the ship, such as caviar at the champagne bar (if your ship has one), or cigars at the cigar bar (if your ship has one). Some ships charge extra for afternoon ice-cream sundaes. All ships that offer babysitting (as opposed to the organized kids' programs) charge for it.

You'll also pay extra for such activities as golf simulators or miniature golf, and video games. And some lines charge a small service fee for dinner in the ship's alternative restaurant. If you have teenagers or are a Type A personality who needs to stay in touch, you may find that you tally up an impressive e-mail bill.

Don't underestimate the lure of items in the gift shop in your budget planning. The shops offer frequent sales, and are especially attractive during days at sea (when you can't shop in port). And don't think you won't be tempted by the photos snapped on board by the ship's photographer. Even if you're a reluctant poser they'll get you, and you'll find them offered the next day not only in regular pictures but also as key chains and other nifty souvenirs.

3 Booking Through a Travel Agent

You may wonder whether the traditional travel agent has been replaced by the Internet or gone the way of typewriters and eight-track tapes. Well, not exactly. Booking a cruise is a complicated process, with lots of nuances. That's why the vast majority of cruise passengers book through agents, particularly those who specialize in cruises (see below). The cruise lines are happy with the system, have only small reservations staffs themselves (unlike the airlines), and actually discourage direct sales. Even if you do try to call a cruise line to book yourself, you may be advised to contact an agent in your area (the cruise line may even offer

you a name from its list of preferred agencies). And while lines like Royal Caribbean, Celebrity, Holland America, and Norwegian Cruise Line take bookings over their websites, they also offer links to their preferred agents (and any Web specials the lines offer on the sites are also typically available through agents).

The process of booking a cruise is probably more involved than you think, and a good travel agent can save you both time and money. By working with an agent, you don't have to hassle with calling cruise lines for brochures; agencies have them in stock. Plus, agents usually work for you for free (the bulk of their fee is paid by the cruise lines). Your agent will also help you make decisions on the type of **cabin** best suited for your needs, help you arrange your **dining-room seating preference** and **travel insurance,** and handle any **special requests** you may have such as meal requirements or notifying the cruise line of a birthday or anniversary that will be celebrated on board.

Your agent will discuss with you optional **airfare programs** offered by the lines, **transfers** from the airport to the pier, and any pre- or post-cruise hotel or tour programs. Some lines also let you purchase **shore excursions** in advance (for more on shore excursions, see above). And there may also be pre-bookable spa packages available.

However, if you are computer savvy and have a good idea of what you're looking for in a cruise (which you probably will after reading this book), **websites** are a great way to trawl the seas at your own pace and check out last-minute deals. But keep in mind that you won't get much in the way of personalized service when you book a cruise online. And if something does go wrong or you need help getting a refund, you're on your own. That's why we recommend you go ahead and do research on the Web if you want, but make your actual booking through an experienced agent.

If you don't have a good travel agent, try to find one through your friends, preferably those who have cruised before. For the most personal service, look for an agent in your local area, and for the most knowledgeable service, look for someone who has cruised before, preferably on one of the lines you're considering. It's perfectly okay to ask prospective agents questions about their experience, such as whether they have ever cruised in Europe.

It really doesn't matter whether your agent is at a small agency or works for a large national agency. And it's a personal choice whether you prefer to work with an agent face-to-face or over the phone. What is important is that the agent gets to know you and understands your vacation desires. He or she should ask you questions about your lifestyle and past vacation experiences (be wary of using an agent who doesn't ask you such questions).

It is important to realize that **not all agents represent all cruise lines.** In order to be experts on what they sell, and to maximize the commissions the lines pay them (they're paid more based on volume of sales), some agents may limit their product to, say, one luxury line, one mid-priced line, one mass-market line, and so on. If you have your sights set on a particular line or have it narrowed down between a couple, make sure the agent you choose can handle your choices. As we mentioned above, you can contact the lines directly to get the name of an agent near you.

It's perfectly okay to shop around, calling a few different agents to compare rates. Some agents will even offer perks to keep your business (such as a free cabin upgrade or a bottle of champagne).

Keeping an Open Hot Line to Your Agent

Since you'll be traveling on Europe time, it's particularly important to make sure your agent has some sort of 24-hour service in case you run into any problems. Many agencies contract with outside firms for this coverage, which is perfectly okay. The bottom line is, you want someone you can call for assistance no matter what time it is back home.

CRUISE AGENCIES & CRUISE SPECIALISTS

The easiest way to ensure the agent is experienced in booking cruises is to work with an agent at a **cruise-only agency** (all cruises, all the time) or to find an agent who is a **cruise specialist.** If you call a full-service agency (which handles all types of travel), ask to speak to someone at its cruise desk.

The easiest way to find reputable cruise agents is to check the membership rosters of the **Cruise Lines International Association** (**CLIA; ✆ 212/921-0066;** www.cruising.org) or the **National Association of Cruise Oriented Agencies** (**NACOA; ✆ 305/663-5626;** www.nacoaonline.com). Members of both groups are cruise specialists.

Membership in the **American Society of Travel Agents** (**ASTA; ✆ 800/275-2782;** www.astanet.com) ensures that the agency is monitored for ethical practices, although it does not in itself designate cruise experience.

Cruise specialists with the Certified Travel Counselor (CTC) designation have completed a professional-skills course offered by the **Institute of Certificated Travel Agents (ICTA),** and the designation is another guarantor of in-depth knowledge of the industry. You can find the institute's website at www.icta.com.

GETTING EXTRA-SPECIAL DEALS THROUGH AGENTS

Agents, especially those who specialize in cruises, are in frequent contact with the cruise lines, and are alerted by the lines, either by e-mail or fax, about the latest and greatest deals and special offers. The cruise lines tend to communicate such deals and offers to their top agents first, before the general public, and some of these discounts will never appear in your local newspaper.

Depending on the agency you choose, you may run across additional incentives for booking through an agent.

- **Newsletters:** To keep their clients alert to specials, agencies may offer newsletters or have other means of communication, such as postcards, e-mail, or posting the specials on their Internet sites.
- **Group Rates:** Some agencies buy big blocks of space on a ship in advance and offer it to their clients at a group price only available through that agency. These are called group rates, although "group" in this case means savings, not that you have to hang around with the other people booking through the agency.
- **Rebates and Incentives:** Some agencies are willing to give back to the client a portion of their commissions from the cruise line in order to close a sale, in what is known as rebates or incentives. This percentage may be monetary, or it may take the form of a perk such as a free bottle of champagne or a cabin upgrade.

ROUNDING UP ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The **glossy brochures** produced by all the cruise lines are basically advertisements, but they do contain valuable information—such as deck layouts and schematics (and sometimes photos) of the different cabin categories—that'll help you when selecting and booking your cruise. Of course, the verbiage in these brochures may not be all that straightforward. For instance, "comfortable cabins" can be another way of saying "small." The lines put a lot of money into these brochures, and they all show off their ships in a beautiful light. Rarely are lower-end cabins shown, for instance.

TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE INTERNET

The Internet is another good source for gathering information on cruises. Most major lines have their own sites, which typically offer information on cabin configurations and public rooms, and sometimes feature a virtual tour of the ships. Most of the cruise lines' sites also have links to that line's preferred agents.

And as we said above, not all the sites accept bookings, and while you may find **special deals** at the sites, these are usually the same deals your travel agent can get you. When Internet-only deals are offered, they tend to come from agencies rather than the cruise lines themselves. ***Tip:*** If you do find a better rate online than your land-based agent is offering, you can always ask your agent to match the price.

Websites selling cruises include online travel agencies that sell all types of travel (expedia.com, travelocity.com, uniglobe.com), agencies that specialize in cruises (icruise.com, cruise.com, cruise411.com), travel discounters (bestfares.com, 1travel.com, lowestfare.com), and auction houses (allcruiseauction.com, priceline.com). For a listing of other sites that will be valuable in researching and planning your trip, see "Leading Websites for Cruise Planning," in chapter 1, "Choosing Your Ideal Cruise."

WATCH OUT FOR SCAMS

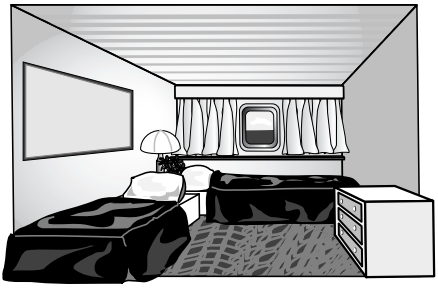
As the adage warns, if you hear a deal that just sounds too good to be true, then it probably is. If you get a solicitation by phone, fax, mail, or e-mail that just doesn't sound right, or if your agent gives you the creeps, contact your state consumer protection agency or local office of the Better Business Bureau (www.bbb.org). Or you can check with the cruise line to see if they've ever heard of the agency in question. Find more ways to avoid scams at the American Society of Travel Agents' website, www.astanet.com.

4 Choosing Your Cabin

The cruise lines have improved accommodations a bit since Charles Dickens referred to his stateroom as a coffin, but cramped, windowless spaces can still be found—on the other hand, so can penthouse-size suites with expansive verandas, Jacuzzis, and hot and cold running butler service.

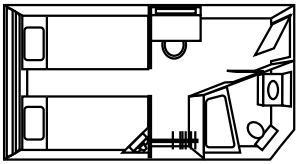
What kind of cabin is right for you? Price will likely be a big factor here, but so should the vacation style you prefer. If, for instance, you plan to spend a lot of quiet time in your cabin, you should probably consider booking the biggest room you can afford, and you should also consider taking a cabin with a picture window or a private veranda. If, conversely, you plan to be off on tours or out and about the ship's public areas and will only be using your cabin to change clothes and collapse in at the end of the day, you might be just as happy with a smaller (and cheaper) cabin.

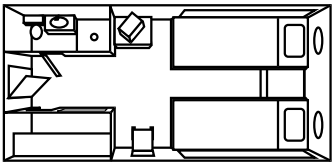
MODEL CABIN LAYOUTS



Typical Outside Cabin Configurations

- Twin beds (can often be pushed together)
- Upper berths for extra passengers fold into walls
- Bathrooms usually have showers only (no tub)
- Usually (but not always) have TVs and radios
- May have portholes or picture windows

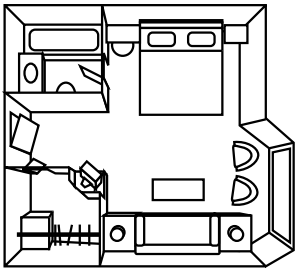






Typical Suite Configurations

- Queen-size or double beds
- Sitting areas (sometimes with sofa beds for extra passengers)
- Large bathrooms, usually with tub
- Refrigerators (sometimes stocked, sometimes not)
- Stereos and TVs with VCRs are common
- Large closets
- Large windows or outside verandas



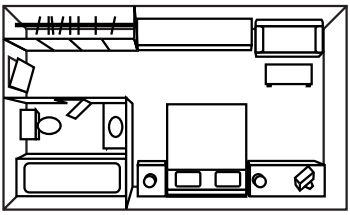


Figure 2-1: Sample cabin layouts.

Most cabins on cruise ships today have a private bathroom with a shower and twin beds that are convertible to queen-size (you can request which configuration you want), though some ships also have a limited number of double beds. Some cabins have bunk beds.

Many ships have cabins designed for three or four people that will include bunks. In some, it is possible to add a fifth, portable bed. Some lines offer special cabins designed for families. Families may also be able to book connecting cabins (although they'll have to pay for two cabins to do so).

Some cabins have televisions. Some also have such extra amenities as safes, mini-refrigerators, VCRs, bathrobes, and hair dryers. A bathtub is considered a luxury on ships and will usually only be offered in more expensive rooms.

CABIN TYPES

The typical ship offers several types of cabins, as outlined by floor plans in the cruise line's brochure. The cabins are usually described by **price** (highest to lowest), **category** (suite, deluxe, superior, standard, economy, and others), and **furniture configuration** ("sitting area with two lower beds," for example). Diagrams of the various cabin types are typically included (see sample on p. 35).

The cabins will also be described as being **inside** (without windows or portholes) or **outside** (with). Outside cabins are more expensive because windows allow natural light into the cabin and may allow ocean views—though some may be obstructed (usually by a lifeboat) or look out onto a public area, which will be an issue if you crave privacy. An experienced travel agent should be able to advise you on these matters.

THE SOUNDS OF SILENCE

Noise can be a factor that may influence your cabin choice. If you take a cabin on a lower deck, you may hear engine noises; in the front of the ship, anchor noises; and in the back of the ship, thruster noises. A cabin near an elevator may bring door-opening and -closing sounds. Cabins on the Promenade Deck may sound great, but you may hear passengers walking or talking outside or even peeking into your cabin. And a cabin above or below the disco may pulse until all hours of the night. You may also want to avoid cabins near the laundry area or galley. If noise is a problem for you, make your cabin choice accordingly. A ship's deck plan can clue you in to potential problems.

On the big ships, the more deluxe outside cabins may also come with **verandas** that give you private outdoor space to enjoy sea breezes. But the verandas vary in size, so if you're looking to do more than stand on your balcony, make sure the outdoor space is big enough to accommodate deck chairs, a table, or whatever else you require. And before you step out in your birthday suit, realize that private doesn't necessarily mean your neighbors can't see you.

Usually, the higher on the ship (by deck) the cabin is located, the more expensive and nicer the cabin is. This is true even if there are cabins of the same size on lower decks (the decor changes).

Luxury suites are usually on upper decks, but a quirky thing about cabin pricing is that the most stable cabins during rough seas are those in the middle and lower parts of the ship.

On **small ships,** cabins can run to the truly spartan, though some can also give the big-ship cabins a run for their money. Generally, the difference lies in the orientation of the line: Those promising a real adventure experience tend to feature somewhat utilitarian cabins.

What Is Luxury?

Cruise lines freely use terms like *deluxe* and *luxury*, but these terms vary greatly from line to line, rendering them virtually meaningless. Instead, evaluate cabins based on size and amenities offered.

CABIN SIZES

The size of a cabin is described in terms of square feet. This number may not mean a lot unless you want to mark it out on your floor at home. But to give you an idea: 120 square feet and under is low-end and cramped, 180 square feet is mid-range (and the minimum for people with claustrophobia), and 250 square feet and up is suite-size.

A FEW CABIN-CHOOSING TIPS

Make sure the **beds** in the cabin can be configured the way you want. Not all cabins offer double or queen-size beds. If you want a **bathtub** or **television,** make sure you choose a cabin that has one. If you are traveling by **wheelchair,** make sure the cabin and bathroom doors are wide enough to accommodate your chair. (Of course there will be other accessibility considerations if you are traveling by wheelchair; be sure to discuss them with the line before you book.) **Book early for first-choice of cabins** (the cheapest and most expensive cabins tend to sell out first).

5 Choosing Your Dining Options

In addition to choosing your cabin, you can also choose your preferred meal seating time, if you're on a ship that requires one. Smaller ships and luxury vessels (with the exception of Crystal) serve dinner in an open seating, or restaurant-style, allowing you to sit at any table you want; if you plan to sail one of these lines, you can skip this section. Norwegian Cruise Line also offers open seating, and Princess Cruises has an open-seating option. But because most dining rooms on larger ships are not large enough to accommodate all passengers at once, these ships typically offer two seatings, or sittings, especially for dinner. All table space is on a reserved basis. Early or main seating is typically at 6pm. Late seating is at 8:30pm.

There are advantages and disadvantages to both times, and it basically comes down to personal choice. The **early seating** is usually less crowded and is the preferred time for families and seniors. The dining experience can be a bit more rushed (the staff needs to make way for the next wave), but food items may be fresher since they haven't had to wait under warmers. You can see a show right after dinner, and have first dibs on other nighttime venues as well. And you just may be hungry again in time for the **midnight buffet.**

The **late seating,** on the other hand, allows you time for a good long nap or a late spa appointment before dining. Dinner is not rushed at all. You can sit as long as you want enjoying after-dinner drinks—unless, that is, you choose to rush off to catch the 10pm show.

If you choose to also eat **breakfast and lunch** in the dining room as opposed to at the more casual venues on the ship, theoretically you are also supposed to eat at assigned times as well. We've found, though, that most ships are fairly flexible in this area. Crowds in the dining room are typically only an issue at dinner

(a lot of people eat lunch in the ports). If you show up other than at your assigned time for breakfast or lunch and your assigned table is full, the staff will probably just seat you elsewhere.

Typical meal times for breakfast are 7 or 8am for the early seating and 8:30 or 9am for the late. For lunch, it's usually noon for the early seating and 1:30pm or so for the late.

SPECIAL DIETARY OR MENU REQUESTS

Though many cruise lines these days offer vegetarian and low-fat meals as a standard feature, you should still arrange any special dietary needs through your travel agent at the time you make your reservation. Some lines offer kosher menus, and all will have vegetarian, low-fat, low-salt, and sugar-free options available.

Also have your agent let the cruise line know of any birthday or anniversary that will occur during the cruise so they can plan to help you celebrate accordingly.

TABLE SIZES

Do you mind sitting with strangers? Are you looking to make new friends? Your dinner companions can make or break your cruise experience. Most ships offer tables configured for 2 to 12 people. For singles or couples who want to socialize, generally a table of six to eight seats allows enough variety so you don't get bored and also allows you the ability to steer clear of any one individual you don't particularly care for (tables are assigned, not seats). Couples may choose to sit on their own, but keep in mind that the smallest tables are typically the hardest to come by. Singles may find the ship reluctant to offer a table for one. A family of four may want to choose a table for four, or request to sit with another family at a table for eight.

You need to state your preference in advance, but don't worry if you change your mind once you're on board. You'll probably be able to move around. Just tell the dining room maitre d' and he'll review the seating charts for an opening (greasing his palm will probably help).

Many ships now feature **smoke-free dining rooms,** but if smoking is a particular concern to you, check this out with your travel agent. If the room isn't nonsmoking, you can request a nonsmoking table. Vice versa for smokers.

6 Deposits & Cancellation Policies

You'll be asked by your travel agent to make a **deposit,** either of a fixed amount (usually $300–$1,000) or at some percentage of your total cruise cost. You'll be asked to pay the remaining fare usually 60 to 90 days before your departure date. Make sure before making any payment that you carefully review the line's refund policy. You'll find the policy listed in the back of the cruise line's brochure.

Cancellation penalties vary by line. Before paying a dime you should make sure you understand the payment schedule that you're agreeing to by putting down your deposit.

If at all possible, make your payment with a credit card. This gives you an additional avenue of recourse should you encounter any problems.

Cruise lines have varying policies regarding **cancellations,** and it's important to read the fine print. Most lines, but not all, allow you to cancel for a full refund on your deposit and payment anytime up to 76 days before the sailing.

After that time, you'll have to pay a penalty, which increases as you get closer to your sailing date. If you cancel a month before the sailing, for instance, you might have to pay 50% of your fare as a penalty. If you cancel at the last minute, you may not be refunded any of what you've paid. However, exceptions are made based on worldwide events (the lines tend to be more lenient at times of war, for instance).

7 Your Cruise Documents

About 1 month before your cruise and no later than 1 week before, you should receive your cruise documents, including your **airline tickets** (if you purchased them from the cruise line), a **boarding document** with your cabin (and sometimes dining) choice on it, boarding forms to fill out, **luggage tags,** and your prearranged **bus transfer vouchers** and **hotel vouchers** (if applicable). There will also be information on shore excursions and additional material detailing things you need to know before you sail.

Read all of this carefully. Make sure your cabin category and dining preferences are as you requested and that your airline flight and arrival times are what you were told. If there are problems, call your agent immediately. Make sure there is enough time so you can arrive at the port no later than an hour before departure time.

You will be required to have a **passport** for your trip (see chapter 3 for more on this). You won't likely need a visa, but based on your itinerary, ask your travel agent if this applies.

We recommend that you **confirm your flight** 3 days before departure. Also, before you leave for the airport, tag your bags with the tags provided by the cruise line, and fill in your boarding cards. This will save you time when you arrive at the ship.

8 Travel Insurance

Three primary types of insurance are available: trip cancellation, medical, and lost luggage. **Trip cancellation insurance,** which we most recommend, is a good idea because you have paid a large portion of your expenses up front for a cruise, and want that investment protected. It typically costs 6% to 8% of the total value of your vacation. Make sure the policy covers bankruptcy or default of the cruise line. **Medical insurance** and **lost luggage insurance** don't make sense for most travelers because your existing health insurance should cover you if you get sick on vacation (though if you belong to an HMO, you might want to make sure you are fully covered when away from home), and your homeowner's insurance should cover stolen luggage if you have off-premises theft protection. Check your existing policies before you buy additional coverage, and don't buy more insurance than you need. If, for example, you only need trip-cancellation insurance, don't buy coverage for lost or stolen property. Be aware that some credit cards (American Express and certain gold and platinum Visa and MasterCards, for example) offer automatic flight and baggage insurance. Keep in mind that airlines are responsible for up to $2,500 on domestic flights and only $635 on international flights if they lose your luggage; if you don't have baggage insurance and plan to carry anything more valuable than that, keep it in your carry-on bag.

For information, contact one of the following insurers: **Access America** (✆ 866/807-3982; www.accessamerica.com); **Travel Guard International** (✆ 800/826-4919; www.travelguard.com); **Travel Insured International**

(✆ 800/243-3174; www.travelinsured.com); and **Travelex Insurance Services** (✆ 888/457-4602; www.travelex-insurance.com).

Please note: Always check the fine print before you sign on; more and more policies have built-in exclusions and restrictions that may leave you out in the cold if something does go awry.

3

Things to Know Before You Go

You've bought your ticket and you're getting ready to cruise. Here are a few nuts and bolts, odds and ends, FYIs, and helpful hints to consider before you go.

1 Passports & Visas

Citizens of non-EU countries need a **passport** to enter any European country. When traveling, safeguard your passport in an inconspicuous, inaccessible place like a money belt (don't pack it in your check-in luggage) and keep a photocopy in a separate place, just for backup. On some ships, you are required to turn in your passport to the purser's office for the duration of your cruise.

APPLYING FOR A NEW PASSPORT

Allow plenty of time before your trip to apply for a passport; in the United States, processing normally takes 3 weeks but can take longer during busy periods (especially spring). And keep in mind that if you need a passport in a hurry, you'll pay a higher processing fee.

For Residents of the United States: Whether you're applying in person or by mail, you can download passport applications from the U.S. State Department website at **http://travel.state.gov**. For general information, call the **National Passport Agency** (✆ **202/647-0518**). To find your regional passport office, either check the U.S. State Department website or call the **National Passport Information Center** (✆ **900/225-5674**); the fee is 55¢ per minute for automated information and $1.50 per minute for operator-assisted calls.

For Residents of Canada: Passport applications are available at travel agencies throughout Canada or from the central **Passport Office,** Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Ottawa, ON K1A 0G3 (✆ **800/567- 6868;** www.ppt.gc.ca).

For Residents of the United Kingdom: To pick up an application for a standard 10-year passport (5-yr. passport for children under 16), visit your nearest passport office, major post office, or travel agency or contact the **United Kingdom Passport Service** at ✆ **0870/521-0410** or search its website at www.ukpa.gov.uk.

For Residents of Ireland: You can apply for a 10-year passport at the **Passport Office,** Setanta Centre, Molesworth Street, Dublin 2 (✆ **01/671-1633;** www.irlgov.ie/iveagh). Those under age 18 and over 65 must apply for a €12 3-year passport. You can also apply at 1A South Mall, Cork (✆ **021/272-525**) or at most main post offices.

For Residents of Australia: You can pick up an application from your local post office or any branch of Passports Australia, but you must schedule an interview at the passport office to present your application materials. Call the **Australian**

What to Do if You Lose Your Passport

If you lose your passport, notify the ship's purser. He or she will help you arrange a visit to the nearest consulate of your home country as soon as possible to have the passport replaced.

Passport Information Service at ✆ **131-232,** or visit the government website at www.passports.gov.au.

For Residents of New Zealand: You can pick up a passport application at any New Zealand Passports Office or download it from their website. Contact the **Passports Office** at ✆ **0800/225-050** in New Zealand or 04/474-8100, or log on to www.passports.govt.nz.

VISAS

Your cruise line will advise you if any visas are needed for the countries you will visit (if in doubt, call the line or ask your travel agent). In most cases, a visa is not required if you are visiting a country for a limited amount of time (less than 24 hr.). If you are visiting Russia, you do not need a visa to take a shore excursion, but you will need one to head off on your own. Visas need to be applied for well in advance of your trip. The easiest place to apply is through a **visa service,** and your travel agent can guide you to one in your area. A small fee is charged for the service. You can also apply by contacting the embassy of the country you will be visiting.

2 Money Matters

You have already paid the lion's share of your cruise vacation, but you will still need a credit card, traveler's checks, or cash to handle your onboard expenses such as drinks, shore excursions, photos by the ship's photographer, spa services, gift shop purchases, and so forth. Some ships (but not all) will take a personal check.

You will want cash for taxis, drinks, small purchases, and tips for guides in port. You may also need cash to pay crew tips at the end of the cruise, although some lines allow you to charge tips. And you'll want a few dollars on hand in case you want to tip a crewmember for room service.

ABOARD SHIP

Cruise ships themselves operate on a cashless basis. Basically, this means you keep a running tab. You sign for virtually everything you want to buy all week long—drinks at the bar, shore excursions, and gift shop purchases—and pay up at the end of the cruise with cash or a credit card (you can use cash in the casino). Very convenient, yes—and also very easy to spend more than you would if you had to dole out cash each time you made a purchase.

On some European ships, the onboard items are priced in European currency, such as the euro, so you may want to bring a calculator with you to figure out what you are really spending for that nifty T-shirt with the ship's logo or that special drink of the day.

We've included a chart in chapter 10 showing relative currency values of the major European currencies at press time. For more current conversions, check out the currency calculator (hit the "Charts & Analysis" button) at **www.bloomberg.com**.

Shortly before or after embarkation, a purser or check-in clerk in the terminal or on board will request an imprint of one of your credit cards. (If you want to pay in cash or by traveler's check, you will be asked to leave a deposit, usually $250 for a 1-week sailing.) Larger ships will then issue you an **identification card** that you show whenever you board the ship after spending the day in port and that you also use when you sign for something. On the newest ships, this same ID card often serves as your room key. Smaller and older ships may not use these ID cards and still issue regular room keys.

On the last day of your cruise, an **itemized account** of all you've charged throughout the cruise is slipped beneath your cabin door. If you agree with the charges, they are automatically billed to your credit-card account. If you are paying in cash or if you dispute any charge, then you need to stop by the ship's cashier or purser's office, where there's usually a long line.

We suggest you keep careful track of your onboard expenses to avoid an unpleasant surprise at the end of your cruise. Some ships make this tracking particularly easy by offering interactive TV, enabling you to check your account from your own stateroom. On others, you have to visit the purser's or guest-relations desk to review your account. You can do so as often as you choose, but you may encounter lines of others doing the same.

IN PORT

The cashless system works just fine on board, but you will need some dough in port. Of course, you can put any shore excursions you sign up for on your room tab, and credit cards are accepted at most port shops (as are traveler's checks).

It can be more expensive to exchange your money for foreign currency in your own country than it is once you've reached your destination. But it's a good idea to arrive in Europe with a bit of local currency, enough at least to buy a cup of coffee and a newspaper between flights or to get you to your hotel or ship. About $30 to $50 should do it.

Many of the larger ships operating in Europe offer **exchange services** where you can exchange your currency for the local currency of the country you're visiting. This is usually accomplished by a local bank official coming on board at the port. Some ships have special ATMs (automated teller machines) that do currency exchange (for a fee). Most ships do not offer exchange services at the purser's desk.

Your ship, if it's an American line, may also have an ATM that delivers greenbacks (usually for a hefty fee). Some lines will also cash personal checks up to a set amount (usually around $200). See chapter 10 for exchange rates from U.S., Canadian, U.K., Australian, and New Zealand currencies into all the local currencies you'll use in port.

ATMS IN EUROPE

The easiest and best way to get cash away from home is from an **ATM.** Nearly every town in Europe (even the tiny ones) has an ATM that will give you local currency (but not dollars) from your ATM or PIN-enabled Visa or MasterCard

Tips Have Cash on Hand

When you're on shore, we recommend having some real cash on you, ideally in small denominations, for taxi rides, snacks, and street-side souvenir vendors.

(contact the issuing bank to enable this feature and get a PIN). The **Cirrus** (✆ **800/424-7787;** www.mastercard.com) and **PLUS** (✆ **800/843-7587;** www.visa.com) networks span the globe; look at the back of your bank card to see which network you're on, then call or check online for ATM locations at your destination. Before you leave home, make sure the PINs on your bank- and credit cards will work in Europe; you usually need a four-digit code (six digits may not work in Europe). Also find out your daily withdrawal limit before you depart, and keep in mind you can only access your checking account (not savings) from ATMs abroad.

Although ATMs usually give a better exchange rate than banks or exchange services, remember that many banks impose a fee every time a card is used at a different bank's ATM, and that fee can be higher for international transactions (up to $5 or more) than for domestic ones (where they're rarely more than $2). On top of this, the bank from which you withdraw cash may charge its own fee.

We usually rely on ATMs, but we also find it's a good idea to have some cash or traveler's checks just in case of emergency (or in case the bank computer lines are down).

EXCHANGING MONEY

If you are not using ATMs, then try to exchange your money at a bank rather than the exchange services found in busy tourist areas or at your hotel. The exchange rate is usually higher at banks and the service fee less.

USING CREDIT CARDS

Most restaurants, shops, and hotels in Europe accept major credit cards such as American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard, and Visa (but not Discover). The most widely accepted cards are Visa and MasterCard. Despite the fact most issuing banks will tack on currency conversion fees (1% or 2%), credit cards are usually the best way to pay, rather than carrying lots of cash.

If your wallet is lost or stolen, immediately inform your credit card companies and file a report at the nearest police precinct. Your credit card company or insurer may require a police report number or record of the loss. Most credit card companies have an emergency toll-free number to call if your card is lost or stolen; they may be able to wire you a cash advance immediately or deliver an emergency credit card in a day or two. **Visa's** U.S. emergency number is ✆ **800/847-2911** or 410/581-9994. **American Express** cardholders and traveler's check holders should call ✆ **800/221-7282. MasterCard** holders should call ✆ **800/307-7309** or 636/722-7111. For other credit cards, call the toll-free number directory at ✆ **800/555-1212.**

If you need emergency cash over the weekend when all banks and American Express offices are closed, you can have money wired to you via **Western Union** (✆ **800/325-6000;** www.westernunion.com).

Identity theft or fraud are potential complications of losing your wallet, especially if you've lost your driver's license along with your cash and credit cards. Notify the major credit-reporting bureaus immediately; placing a fraud alert on your records may protect you against liability for criminal activity. The three major U.S. credit-reporting agencies are **Equifax** (✆ **800/766-0008;** www.equifax.com), **Experian** (✆ **888/397-3742;** www.experian.com), and **Trans Union** (✆ **800/680-7289;** www.transunion.com). Finally, if you've lost all forms of photo ID, call your airline and explain the situation; they might allow you to board the plane if you have a copy of your passport or birth certificate and a copy of the police report you've filed.

Tips Dear Visa: I'm Off to Kilarnney!

Some credit card companies recommend that you notify them of any impending trip abroad so that they don't become suspicious when the card is used numerous times in a foreign destination and then block your charges. Even if you don't call your credit card company in advance, you can always contact the card's toll-free emergency number if a charge is refused—a good reason to carry the phone number with you. But perhaps the most important lesson here is to carry more than one card with you on your trip; a card might not work for any number of reasons, so having a backup is the smart way to go.

USING TRAVELER'S CHECKS

Although traveler's checks used to be the only sound alternative to traveling with large amounts of cash, they are less necessary these days because most cities have 24-hour ATMs that allow you to withdraw cash as needed. However, keep in mind that you will likely be charged an ATM withdrawal fee if the bank is not your own, so if you're withdrawing money every day, you might be better off with traveler's checks—provided that you don't mind showing identification every time you want to cash one.

You can get traveler's checks at almost any bank. **American Express** offers denominations of $20, $50, $100, $500, and (for cardholders only) $1,000. You'll pay a service charge ranging from 1% to 4%. You can also get American Express traveler's checks over the phone by calling ✆ **800/221-7282;** Amex gold and platinum cardholders who use this number are exempt from the 1% fee.

Visa offers traveler's checks at Citibank locations nationwide, as well as at several other banks. The service charge ranges between 1.5% and 2%; checks come in denominations of $20, $50, $100, $500, and $1,000. Call ✆ **800/732-1322** for information. AAA members can obtain Visa checks without a fee at most AAA offices or by calling ✆ **866/339-3378. MasterCard** also offers traveler's checks. Call ✆ **800/223-9920** for a location near you.

Foreign currency traveler's checks often give a better exchange rate than those denominated in dollars if you're traveling to one country or to the euro zone.

Personal checks are pretty much useless in Europe, except as accepted on your ship (check your ship's policy before relying on this method of payment).

VALUE-ADDED TAX (VAT)

All European countries charge a value-added tax (VAT) of 15% to 35% on goods and services, which is already included in the price you see. Rates vary from country to country, although most are moving toward a 15% rate. Citizens of non-EU countries can get back most of the tax on purchases (but not on services) if they spend a designated amount (usually $50–$200) in a single store.

Regulations vary by country (you should check when you get there or with your ship's purser), but generally you can collect your refund for goods purchased in any EU country at the airport as you leave Europe, or have it mailed to you. To do this, you will be required to have forms and receipts from the store where your purchases were made (make sure to ask for the forms), and may be required to show the items purchased to a VAT official at the airport. Allow an

extra 30 minutes at the airport to get through the process (if you've spent a lot, the wait will be worth it).

3 Health & Safety

It's a good rule of thumb to check with The United States **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** (✆ **800/311-3435;** www.cdc.gov) for up-to-date information on necessary vaccines and health hazards by region or country. In the past, for instance, tetanus-diphtheria boosters have been recommended for travel in St. Petersburg, Russia.

TRAVELERS' ADVISORIES

The **U.S. State Department** issues advisories on areas travelers should be concerned about visiting. You can look up the advisories on the State Department's website (http://travel.state.gov/travel_warnings.html) or call ✆ **202/647-5225** for recorded information.

4 Packing

The great thing about packing for a cruise is that once you're aboard the ship, you only have to unpack once. The downside is you don't always get all that much storage space.

People (including us on some occasions) tend to overpack for cruises, but you don't have to. A cruise vacation is no different from any other, except that you will want to change your clothes for dinner, and there may be a formal night or two.

CLOTHING

Check your cruise documents for specifics on the types of nighttime dress codes (see more on these below) and to see if there are any theme nights for which you may want to dress (Greek night on Greek ships, for instance, means wearing blue and white, the national colors). The daily bulletin delivered to your cabin will advise you on the proper dress for the evening.

Obviously, what you pack will be determined by when you plan to travel (summer is hotter than spring and fall) and where (Northern Europe and Scandinavia are cooler than the Mediterranean). Consult chapter 1 for average temperatures. The type of ship you are on also has some bearing on what you pack—some alternative ships are totally casual.

As a general rule, you are best off packing loose and comfortable cotton or other **lightweight fabrics.** If you are traveling in Northern Europe, bring clothing you can layer. Comfortable **walking shoes** are a must in Europe as many tours involve walking on cobblestones and other uneven surfaces. If you plan on hitting the gym, don't forget sneakers and your workout clothes.

Especially in the Med, you'll want to pack a swimsuit, a sun hat, sunglasses, and plenty of sunscreen (the sun reflects off the water and can be quite bright). And you'll want to have a raincoat and umbrella (useful for blocking the sun if it's not raining), as well as a sweater—even in warm climates you'll want some protection against overactive air-conditioning.

We recommend you leave valuable jewelry home and stick with costume. But if you must bring the real thing, be careful. If you're not wearing it, leave it either in your in-room safe (if there is one) or with the purser.

Tuxedo Rentals

If you are on a cruise with formal nights and don't own a tux or don't want to bother lugging one along, you can often arrange a rental through your travel agent for about $85. Evening clothes may be available for women as well. In some cases, a rental offer arrives with your cruise tickets. If you choose this option, your suit will be waiting for you in your cabin when you arrive.

If you wear glasses or contact lenses, bring an extra pair. And remember to pack whatever toiletries you require (you probably won't be able to find your preferred brand in Europe if you forget).

DAYTIME CLOTHES

Across the board, daytime wear is the same as casual resort wear, meaning T-shirts, polo shirts, bathing suits, jeans, khakis, jogging suits, and sundresses. Remember to bring a cover-up and sandals if you want to go right from your deck chair to lunch in one of the restaurants or to some activity being held in a public room. Many ships ban swimsuits and tank tops from the dining room. When in port, the same dress code generally works. But keep in mind that some religious sites prohibit shorts and sleeveless shirts and require women to wear knee-length skirts. Also be aware of the local culture of the port you are visiting (at some, parading around in short shorts and a bathing suit top is simply not acceptable). And don't forget to wear comfortable shoes!

EVENING CLOTHES

When it comes to evening attire on most ships—with the exception of the casual alternative ships described in chapter 8—you'll want to pack some dressy duds. Most ships have casual, informal, and formal nights. What the cruise line means by these terms will be explained in your documents package. As a general rule **casual** means that men can wear slacks (but jeans may be banned) and shirts with collars, women slacks, skirts, and sundresses. **Informal** (or semiformal) means men wear a jacket (but not necessarily a tie), and women wear something slightly fancier than a sundress. **Formal** means bring out the tuxes and dark suits for the men and cocktail dresses, gowns, or other fancy wear for women. As a woman, Fran finds that at night the best approach is to pack simple outfits that can be dressed up or down with scarves or other accessories. And if you stick to one or two colors, you don't have to pack as many shoes.

In spite of the suggested dress codes, which are usually described in the back of a cruise line's brochure, you'll still find a wide variety of outfits being worn. Invariably, one person's "formal" is quite different from another's. So, like hemlines and everything else these days, to a large extent, anything goes.

SUNDRIES

Like hotels, many ships (especially the newest and the high-end ones) come equipped with hair dryers and supply bathroom amenities such as shampoo, conditioner, lotion, and soap, although you might still want to bring your own products. If you bring your hair dryer, electric razor, curling iron, or laptop, you might want to bring an adapter, since not all ships in Europe run on 110 (the cruise line will provide you with this information).

No need to pack a **beach towel** as they're almost always supplied on board. Bird-watchers will want their **binoculars** and manuals, golfers their clubs (although they can always be rented), and snorkelers their gear (which can also be rented).

If you forget to pack a personal effect or two, don't worry. Most ships offer items like razor blades, toothbrushes, sunscreen, and film on board (but you'll pay a premium price).

Most ships have **laundry service** and some offer **dry-cleaning** service as well (there will be a price list in your cabin). Some ships also offer **self-service laundry rooms** (you'll find them on Royal Caribbean, Crystal, Seabourn, and Holland America, among others) so you can wash, dry, and iron your own clothes.

If you like reading but don't want to lug three or four hefty novels on board, there are options. Most ships of all sizes have **libraries** stocked with books and magazines. Some libraries are more extensive than others, of course; the QE2's is huge, for example. Also, most ships stock paperback bestsellers in their shops.

LUGGAGE RESTRICTIONS

Keep in mind that there may be limitations on the number of bags you can take on the plane (usually two checked bags and one carry-on per person). Checked baggage should not weigh more than 70 pounds. It's a good idea to make sure your baggage is sturdy. Before you use it, make sure there are no rips and that the handles are still firmly attached.

You should plan on bringing a piece of **carry-on luggage** in which you should pack all valuables, prescription and over-the-counter medication, and your cruise documents, passport, and air tickets. In your hand luggage, you should also keep your credit cards, house and car keys, and claim checks for airport parking, as well as a change of clothes and reading materials.

With all the tempting things for sale in Europe, it's important to remember to save **room in your luggage for your souvenirs.** You may even want to pack an extra foldable suitcase for your treasured finds.

4

The Cruise Experience

Unlike their more utilitarian ancestors, today's cruise ships aren't just about transportation. Rather, they're attraction-filled destinations themselves, bustling resorts at sea where there are countless things to do, people to meet, good food and drink, and entertainment.

While the cruise experience varies from ship to ship, the common denominator is choice. You can run from an aerobics class to an art auction and then play bingo, all before lunch, or you can choose to watch the seascape from a quiet deck chair. Whether you like to do it all or do nothing at all, cruising is a convenient and leisurely way of traveling from one exotic port to another. While ports may be the focus for most of us on European cruises, you'll have plenty of time to sample shipboard life as well.

1 Getting Started: Checking In & Boarding

Most people hire a travel agent to plan their cruise vacation, and with good reason: Given all the details—flights, transfers, cabin selection, dining preferences—it makes sense (and can save you money) to use an experienced professional. But once the plans are made, there are a few details left for you.

AIRPORT CHECK-IN

For starters, be sure to confirm your flight before the trip. Since you are flying to Europe, you should get to the airport 2 to 3 hours before your scheduled flight time. This will give you time to check in your bags, get your seat assignments, and pick up a magazine for the long flight.

Make sure your bags are tagged properly with your name and address. If you are checking your bags through to the ship or a hotel booked through the cruise line, make sure your bags are also appropriately labeled with the tags provided by the cruise line.

Remember to bring in your carry-on any valuables (including jewelry and camera equipment), your cruise documents, airline tickets and passport, claim checks for airport parking, house and car keys, eyeglasses, all prescription medications, and any other items you can't do without. It's also a good idea to pack a change of clothes so you can freshen up when you get to the ship or hotel, even if your bags haven't yet arrived. You may also want to take gum, a snack, a book, a magazine, and Dramamine (in case it's a bumpy flight). And we're a big believer in travel pillows, especially for long flights in coach class (they really do help relieve neck pain).

WHAT TO DO IF YOUR FLIGHT IS DELAYED

If your flight is delayed, and you are sailing that day, tell airline personnel. They may be able to get you onto another flight. Also call the cruise line to advise the ship of your delay (there should be an emergency number in your cruise documents). Keep in mind that you may not be the only passenger delayed, and the

line might just hold the ship until you arrive. If your ship does leave without you, you'll be flown or driven to the next port. If you booked your air through the cruise line, you will not be charged for this service, but if you booked air on your own you may have to pay.

ARRIVAL

Assuming you booked air and transfer through the cruise line, you will be met at the airport by a cruise line representative, usually in the baggage area but sometimes after you clear Customs and Immigration. You will probably have to identify your luggage before your bags are transferred to the ship (you won't see them again until they are delivered to your cabin). You will then be escorted to buses to take you to the cruise terminal (or your hotel if you've booked a pre-cruise hotel stay).

If you booked air on your own, you will have to claim your bags and arrange your own transportation to the hotel or ship (you may have to negotiate with a cab driver for a good rate). Make sure you find out in advance exactly which terminal the ship is departing from, since some ports are quite busy and your cab driver may not know exactly where to go. If you need a porter at the terminal, tip him .85€ ($1) per bag (U.S. dollars will be gladly accepted).

CHECKING IN

What happens as you enter the terminal depends on the cruise line and the size of the ship, but generally at this point you can expect to wait in line. Despite the best efforts of the cruise line, the scene at the pier may be zoolike.

You will not be able to board the ship before the scheduled embarkation time, usually about 3 or 4 hours before sailing. That's because the ship has likely had to disembark passengers from the previous cruise earlier that day, and the crew needs time to clean and prepare and take care of the various paperwork and Customs documents that need to be completed. If you fly in on an early flight on the day of departure, the ship may let you board early and wait in a lounge or restaurant until your cabin is ready.

European ships are very strict about boarding times. If the last boarding is scheduled for 5pm, you better be there by 5pm, even if the ship doesn't leave the dock until 6pm. You have up until a half-hour (on some ships, it's 1 hr.) before departure to board, but there are some advantages to boarding earlier, like getting first dibs on prime dining room tables (if you haven't been assigned a table in advance) and spa treatment times. Plus, if you get on early enough, you can

Birthplace of the Pleasure Cruise

Hamburg, Germany, claims to be the place where traveling on a ship dedicated to cruising (as opposed to transporting cargo) was invented. In 1845, the Sloman Shipping Line placed an ad in a Hamburg newspaper promoting that "A fully rigged ship is to go on a voyage of the world which will not have as its aim any mercantile purposes, but the ship's whole facilities and accommodation, the fixing of the times of sojourn in the towns and countries to be visited, the overriding aim of the whole voyage will only be consideration for the security, comfort, entertainment and information of the travelers."

The ad further stated that the cruise was only for people "of good reputation and education."

eat lunch on the ship (depending on the ship and departure time, lunch may be served until 3pm or even 4pm the first day).

For security, either right before or right after you get to the check-in desk, you will likely have to pass through an X-ray machine (like those at the airport).

During check-in, your **boarding documents** will be checked and your passport will likely be taken for immigration processing. You will get it back sometime during the cruise (you might want to carry a photocopy as backup). If you have booked a suite, you may get priority boarding at a special desk. Special-needs passengers may also be processed separately.

Depending on the cruise line, you may establish your **onboard credit account** at this point by turning over a major credit card to be swiped or by making a deposit in cash or traveler's checks (usually $250). On other ships you need to report to the purser's office once on board to establish your onboard credit account. You may also be given your cabin key at check-in (in some cases your onboard credit card doubles as your room key and boarding card), though on some ships your cabin key will be waiting for you at your cabin.

Protocol for establishing your **dining room table assignment,** if one is required (on open-seating ships, it's not) also varies by ship. You may be given your assignment in advance of your sailing (on your tickets), or advised of your table number as you check in. Or a card with your table number may be waiting for you in your stateroom. If you do not receive an assignment by the time you get to your stateroom, you will be directed to a maitre d's desk set up in a convenient spot on board. This is also the place to go to make any changes if your assignment does not meet with your approval.

Make sure your seating time (early or late) and table size are as you requested and that you are in the smoking or nonsmoking section you requested (where applicable). Special dietary requests can also be confirmed at this time.

A bevy of cruise line employees will be on hand to make sure your check-in goes smoothly. Don't be afraid to ask them questions.

After you clear the check-in area, you will likely be corralled into posing for the ship's photographer. These pictures sell for about $7–$9 a pop and will be displayed later for your perusal at the ship's photography shop. Of course, you are under no obligation to buy them. Ditto for any drinks you may be offered as you board.

STEPPING ABOARD

As you exit the gangplank, a crew member will probably escort you to your cabin, probably offering to help carry your hand luggage. No tip is required, but would be accepted.

Either immediately or a short time later, your steward, the person responsible for the upkeep of your cabin, will stop by to introduce him or herself. He or she will point out the various cabin amenities and controls, such as air-conditioning and light switches, advise you on how they can be reached when you need them (usually by phone or buzzer), and answer any immediate questions you have. The steward will also make you aware of the ship's safety drill procedures (see below) and advise you of the location of your muster (assembly) station for the drill.

It's important to alert the steward immediately if the beds are not configured to your liking or if there are any other problems you can see. If the cabin itself is not what you thought you booked, go right to the hotel manager with your complaint.

What Happens if Your Bags Get Lost?

Before you start to panic, keep in mind that on big ships, some 4,000 bags need to be loaded and distributed. But if you're hours into the sailing and getting concerned, don't hesitate to call the guest relations desk (or purser's office). If your luggage really is lost, the cruise line customer relations folks are supposed to spring into immediate action. They, not you, will contact the airline and ground operators to see what's what.

Usually, missing bags will arrive at the ship the next day. They will be either driven or flown to the first port-of-call.

If your baggage is lost, the cruise line will likely provide an overnight kit with such items as a toothbrush and toothpaste. The first night of a cruise is always casual dress, so you don't have to worry about wearing what you have on in the dining room.

If the baggage is still lost the next day, your baggage insurance, if you purchased any, will kick in and you get to go shopping in the ship's shops for proper attire. If you do not have insurance, the line may, at its discretion, offer you cash compensation—usually $50 a day.

If the second night is a formal night, the line may be able to provide a tux for a man and may also have a small selection of clothes available that a woman can borrow. On a recent *Seabourn Spirit* sailing, Fran met a man who had lost his bag, had borrowed a tux, and was impressed the ship even sent a tailor to make sure the tux fit (his bags did arrive, finally, a few days into the cruise).

You can also make the steward aware of any special needs you might have, such as a preference for foam as opposed to feather pillows (extra pillows and blankets should already be in your closet).

In your cabin, on most ships, you will find a **daily program** detailing the day's events, meal times, and so forth, as well as important information on the ship's safety rituals.

There may also be a hotel-like notebook, including room service options, and a phone directory. Your room should also be outfitted with a DO NOT DISTURB sign (important for nappers), order forms for room-service breakfast (if offered), and forms and bags for dry cleaning and laundry services.

You may want to try the TV, safe, and other gadgets to see how they work, check out the bathroom, and so on. The loud whoosh of the toilet is normal (most ships use a vacuum system). Note that you are not supposed to put any objects other than paper in the bowl.

There may be bottles of water provided in your cabin (although the water on most ships is perfectly drinkable). Just because the bottles are there doesn't mean they are free. If you don't know, ask before you open them. Items in the minibar are not free.

There should be directions near the phone advising you how to make calls to other passengers on the ship and to ship personnel, as well as how to request wake-up calls. There should also be directions on dialing outside. Note the cost of outside calls, which can be really expensive—as much as $17 per minute.

Your **luggage** probably won't have arrived yet, but if it has, go ahead and unpack. If not, after you've exhausted your tour of your room, we recommend checking out the rest of the ship.

Before you do this, though, don't forget to put your cash, ID, air tickets, and other valuables in the **cabin safe.** If there is no safe in your room, take this all down to the purser's office where there will be one available. Don't forget to take your shipboard credit card (in case you want to buy a drink) and key with you.

You may find a **deck map** of the ship in your cabin. If not, you should be able to get one at the purser's office, so find your way there. There are usually deck plans and directional signs at main stairways and elevators. You probably won't need the map after the first day (part of the fun of being on a big ship is getting lost, anyway), but it's a good way to establish the layout in your mind.

Begin your tour on the top deck and work your way down, checking out the main public rooms. That way, you can stop at the beginning of your tour at the **"welcome aboard" buffet,** which is usually set up in the casual dining area, near the pool deck.

If you plan to use the spa services, stop by and make appointments so you can get your preferred times (the best times go fast, and some popular treatments sell out). The staff may be offering an introductory **spa tour.** Also stop by at the gym, especially if you plan on taking fitness classes. The fitness staff will likely be on hand to pass out schedules and answer any questions you might have.

Note the ship's casino and shops are always closed when the ship is in port. While in the port, the swimming pool(s) will also likely be tarped—to be filled with either fresh or salt water after the ship sets sail.

Some ships offer **escorted tours** of the public rooms. If you aren't comfortable roaming on your own, check the daily program in your cabin for details.

LIFEBOAT/SAFETY DRILL

In your room you will find, either waiting on your bed or in the closet or a drawer, bright orange **life jackets.** If you are traveling with kids, there should be special jackets for them (if not, alert your steward). Ships are required by law to conduct safety drills within the first 24 hours. Most do it either right before the ship sails or shortly thereafter. Attendance is mandatory, and the crew often takes attendance. A notice on the back of your cabin door will list the procedures and advise as to your assigned **muster station** and how to get there. You will also find directions to the muster station in the hallway. You will be alerted as to the time in both the daily program and in repeated public announcements (and probably by your steward as well).

To start the drill, the ship will broadcast its emergency signal. At this time you will be required to return to your cabin, grab your life jacket, and report to your assigned muster station (this will be in a lounge, the casino, or another public room). Some drills last only a few minutes, while others are quite detailed. At the muster station, a crew member will review how to put on your life vest. He or she will also point out the features of the vest, including the whistle to call for help (don't try it out here!) and the light that turns on when it hits the water. The drill may also include a visit to the **lifeboats** and even a discussion of how to jump into the water.

In some cases guests will be required to put on the life jacket so a crew member can check and make sure it's being worn correctly; on other ships you just need to bring it with you on the drill.

If you have additional questions about safety procedures, you can address them to a crew member or officer at this time. On some ships, in addition to the drill, a safety video will also be broadcast on the TV in your cabin.

After the drill, return to your cabin and put your life jacket back in its place.

2 An Introduction to Onboard Activities

In Europe, you will probably want to spend most of your time exploring the ports. But from morning till night, most big ships also offer an extensive schedule of onboard activities, especially during days at sea (when the ship isn't visiting a port). All the contests, lessons, and classes will be listed in the ship's **daily program,** which is placed in your cabin the previous evening, usually while you're at dinner. A **cruise director** and his or her staff are in charge of the festivities and do their best to ensure a good time for everyone. Smaller ships offer activities, too, but often with less hoopla; there may be wine-tastings, port talks by the cruise director and captain, and maybe presentations by guest lecturers.

Many lines encourage passengers to have fun. Hence you will find group contests (remember *Family Feud?*), bingo, shipboard horse racing, pool games, and the like.

If you're a performer at heart, volunteer for the weekly **passenger talent show** or head to the nightclub one evening for **karaoke.** Brainy types can sign up for trivia quizzes, and there will also likely be chess, checkers, bridge, or backgammon tournaments.

Winners of any of the above get prizes like champagne, T-shirts, mugs, or key chains, maybe even a massage from the spa, all of which add to the fun.

SHIPBOARD CASINOS

For all you high-rollers out there, all but the smallest, adventure-oriented ships have casinos. Not surprisingly, the megas have the biggest, flashiest, Vegas-style casinos, full of neon, with literally hundreds of slot machines and dozens of blackjack, poker, and craps tables as well as roulette. Smaller ship lines, like Windstar and Seabourn, have casinos as well, albeit scaled-down ones, with maybe a dozen slots and a couple of blackjack and poker tables. European ships tend to have smaller casinos than American ships (it's a cultural thing). Stakes aboard most ships are relatively low, with maximum bets rarely exceeding $200. Average minimum bets at blackjack and poker tables are generally $5; the minimum at roulette is typically 50¢ or $1. Children are not allowed in onboard casinos.

CLASSES, LESSONS & DEMONSTRATIONS

There are plenty of learning opportunities available on ships in Europe. Most feature a lecturer, usually a university professor, author, diplomat, or museum curator well versed in the art, architecture, and history of the regions you will be visiting.

For those seeking less cerebral pursuits, there are likely to be **line dancing and ballroom dancing lessons** held a few times a week on big ships in the main show lounge, and taught by one of the onboard entertainers. There may also be informative **seminars** on subjects like cooking, bartending, arts and crafts, and wine tasting; there is usually a $5–$15 charge for the wine tasting and sometimes there's a cost for arts and crafts materials. There may even be classes on topics such as **personal investing** or **handwriting analysis.**

The chef might do a food-decorating demonstration and share tips on how to carve flowers and animals out of fruits and vegetables. Demonstrations by the salon and spa staff on hair and skin care are common, too (not to mention free advertising for their not-so-cheap spa treatments).

QUIET DIVERSIONS

For those seeking quieter times, there is always the option of planting yourself in a deck chair with a good book. Many ships have **libraries** (some are nice plush retreats) stocked with classic books and new releases. Some of the libraries also have a collection of CDs and chairs specially equipped with CD players and headphones. Some ships also have **video libraries** (you can take the movie back to your cabin to play on your VCR) and/or offer both standard TV movies and pay-per-view first-run movies on in-cabin TVs. **Cinemas** on some ships also show classic and first-run movies. Some ships offer **computers** preprogrammed with both reference materials and games. Usually adjacent to the library you'll find the **card room,** a nice quiet place to play (usually with bridge as the top attraction). Here you'll often also find board games like Monopoly, backgammon, and Scrabble.

ART AUCTIONS

Many large ships offer art auctions, which are fun and entertaining but not necessarily guaranteed to give you a bargain price. Outside concessionaires with really entertaining salespeople run the auctions, with the artwork fetching anywhere from $50–$85,000 or more. The auctions are big business on ships these days, and you'll see a lot of pieces sold.

The auctions are held several times during the cruise in a lounge, with the salesperson briefly discussing each painting before opening the floor up to bids. The offerings will include some big names like Peter Max, Marc Chagall, Joan Miró, Walt Disney, and Salvador Dalí, plus some absolute schlock. They're usually sold duty-free, with or without frames, and can be packed and mailed home to the winner for an additional fee (it will take several weeks to arrive).

On vessels including the *Grand Princess* and *Star Princess* and the *Seven Seas Voyager,* you can also bid on some of the art that's displayed aboard the ship if something really catches your eye.

ONBOARD SPORTS & FITNESS OPTIONS

If you're into sports, the megaships pack the most punch. In addition to well-equipped gyms rivaling those on shore, they boast outdoor volleyball, basketball, and paddle tennis courts as well as outdoor jogging tracks and several pools for water polo, volleyball, aqua-aerobics, and swimming. There may be a $10 charge for specialty fitness classes such as yoga or Pilates.

WATERSPORTS

For watersports enthusiasts, small ships are the best equipped. Windstar, SeaDream, Seven Seas, and Seabourn have retractable watersports platforms that can be lowered from the stern when the ship is anchored, weather permitting. This allows passengers to almost step right from their cabins to snorkel, windsurf, kayak, sail, water-ski, go on banana boat rides, and swim. Star Clippers also has an extensive watersports program, and you can start your PADI diving certification program on board the vessels.

GOLF

If you're a golfaholic, you'll be happy to find that more and more cruises are offering the opportunity to tee off, both on board and on shore. For the casual golfer, a few ships—Royal Caribbean's *Brilliance of the Seas* and Princess's *Grand Princess* and *Star Princess*—have **miniature golf courses** on board. Cunard's *Queen Mary 2* has a putting green. For more serious players, Crystal's *Symphony,* Royal Caribbean's *Brilliance of the Seas,* Cunard's *Queen Mary 2,* and Princess's *Grand Princess* and *Star Princess,* among others, have **golf simulators.** These state-of-the-art virtual-reality machines allow you to play the great courses of the world without ever leaving the ship (for about $20 per half-hour). Full-size clubs are used, and a virtual-reality video screen allows players to watch the electronic path of a ball they've actually hit soar high over the greens or land flat in a sand trap.

Many more lines, including Celebrity, Costa, Crystal, Cunard, Norwegian, Princess, Radisson Seven Seas, and Silversea have on at least some of their ships **outdoor golf cages,** areas enclosed in netting where you can swing, putt, and whack at real golf balls.

More and more lines are offering **golf programs** that include instruction and tips by golf pros who sail on board, going over technique with passengers, sometimes with the use of videotape and computers. Group instruction may be complimentary (as on Crystal and Silversea). Individual half-hour lessons are about $30–$40, and hour-long lessons are $60–$70. In port, Silversea, Crystal, and Seabourn are among lines that offer golf excursions to well-known courses.

SPORTS FOR COUCH POTATOES

No need for those sports-loving couch potatoes out there to be deprived. NCL's *Norwegian Dream* and Princess's *Grand Princess* and *Star Princess* are among the vessels that, in Europe, have dedicated sports bars with large-screen televisions broadcasting ESPN International (which features a lot of soccer). On some ships, you may also be able to watch ESPN International on your in-cabin TV.

3 An Introduction to Onboard Entertainment

The cruise lines offer a vast repertoire of exciting entertainment. As you'd expect, the biggest ships offer the most variety, from Vegas-style cabaret to magicians, soloists, pianists, dance bands, quartets, jugglers, DJs, puppeteers, and comedians.

ENTERTAINMENT ON THE MEGASHIPS

Entertainment is a big part of the cruise experience on the biggest ships, particularly those in the fleets of Royal Caribbean, Celebrity, Costa, Princess, Norwegian Cruise Line, and Holland America. Not surprisingly, they have an extensive variety of options throughout the day. Afternoons, you can dance the day away on deck with the live dance band playing Caribbean melodies (yes, even in Europe).

By about 5pm, before the first-seating dinner (and again at 7pm before the late seating begins), the entertainment choices really kick in. Head to the piano bar for a cocktail or do some pre-dinner, big band–style dancing.

After both the early and the late dinner seating, 2 or more nights during your cruise, the main show lounge will feature **Vegas-style musicals,** where a flamboyant troupe of anywhere from 4 to 16 male and female dancers decked out in feather boas, sequins, and top hats slide and kick their way across the stage (and

lip-sync to the songs' choruses) as a soloist or two belts out show tunes. You'll hear favorites from *Phantom of the Opera, Cats, Hair, Grease, A Chorus Line,* and all the Gershwin and Rodgers and Hammerstein classics. Elaborate stage sets and frequent costume changes on the biggest ships make these shows the entertainment highlight of the week. On some of the European ships, these shows can be downright amateurish, but are no less amusing.

When the Broadway show stuff isn't scheduled, entertainment may be a **magic show,** complete with rabbits in hats and scantily clad assistants getting sawed in half, **acrobatic acts** (always a big hit), and **headlining soloists** (some are quite good). In Europe, some ships bring on **local performers** at ports for special performances (held in the afternoon or evening) usually of the folkloric variety. You might, for instance, be entertained by flamenco performers, or an Irish step-dancing group.

The **club** will probably get going around 9 or 10pm (later on European ships) and continue until 2 or 3am or later. You can dance to the best of '70s, '80s, '90s, and Y2K pop and rock music; often a live band plays until about midnight, when a DJ takes over until the wee hours.

An alternative to the disco or the main show might be a **1950s sock hop** held in another lounge, or a **jazz trio** in yet another romantic nightspot. Show-offs, or those who just like to embarrass themselves, will probably be able to find a **karaoke lounge.**

ENTERTAINMENT ON THE SMALL SHIPS

Ships carrying 100 to 400 passengers have fewer entertainment options, but are no less appealing if you like things mellow. On the high-end lines, there may be a quartet or pianist performing before dinner and maybe afterward, a small-scale **Broadway dance revue,** and dancing in a quiet lounge. The more casual small ships might have taped music or a synth-piano player before and after dinner or no entertainment at all (you can go off to a club at a port for that). Expect a crew and passenger **talent show** to be scheduled during the cruise, too. While in port, small-ship lines like Windstar and Star Clippers might bring **local performers** on board for an afternoon or evening of entertainment. Some small ships also offer movie evenings when a movie is shown in a lounge or outside on the pool deck.

4 Shipboard Gyms & Spas

If your idea of a perfect vacation includes a run on a treadmill or a relaxing seaweed facial, the newest big ships have the biggest and best-equipped fitness and spa facilities. Since the early 1990s, cruise lines have prioritized their spa and fitness areas, moving them out of windowless corners of bottom decks and into prime top-deck positions with oodles of space and lots of glass for soothing views of the ocean. They offer **state-of-the art workout machines** and a host of **spa treatments.**

GYMS: AN ANTIDOTE TO THE MIDNIGHT BUFFET

The well-equipped fitness centers on the megaships may feature a dozen treadmills and just as many stationary bikes, step machines, upper- and lower-body machines, and free weights.

The roomy **aerobics studios** on most big ships built in the last decade or so are the kind you have at your gym back home, with mirrors and special flooring. There are at least a couple of aerobics and stretch classes per day. Certified

The Ubiquitous Steiner

The spas and hair salons on most ships are staffed and operated by a firm called Steiner, a London-based company with a hands-down corner on the market. You'll find most of the prices are steep—for instance, a 55-minute facial or 50-minute massage is $84–$109 (on some ships, 25-min. massages are also available for $59–$75).

The young women who do the massages, facials, manicures, pedicures, reflexology, and other services are usually Brits, South Africans, or Australians. Although professional and charming, they don't always deliver consistent service. A best bet is the massages, which are nearly always well executed. The manicures, pedicures, and facials can be disappointing. And you can't usually get your nails done unless you also submit to a pricey hand (or foot) softening and massaging treatment.

Be aware that Steiner isn't shy either about pushing its extensive and expensive collection of creams, exfoliants, moisturizers, toners, and masks. Get a facial and you'll wind up with an itemized list of four or five products, easily adding up to over $200, that they recommend you buy to get the same effect at home (of course, you can just say no). The shameless promotion of the fancy ointments on some ships, which occurs just as you're coming out of your semi-conscious post-massage trance, certainly brings you back to reality. That said, people rave about the quality of the products.

instructors teach the classes, which usually range from the traditional to the trendy—high- and low-impact, funk, step, body sculpting, stretch and tone, and abdominals.

Older ships often do not devote nearly as much space and resources to sports and fitness. The gyms are generally smaller and more spartan, but on all but the smallest alternative ships you'll find at least a couple of treadmills and a stationary bike or step machine or two, plus some free weights. On ships with limited gym facilities, aerobics classes tend to be held out on deck or in a lounge. As noted earlier, some specialty classes like yoga and Pilates may be offered for a fee, usually $10.

ONBOARD SPAS: TAKING RELAXATION ONE STEP FURTHER

If your idea of a heavenly vacation is spending half of it under a towel being massaged and kneaded with some soothing mystery oil, choose a cruise ship with a well-equipped spa.

Shipboard spas are big business. On post-1990 big ships, they've been given spacious quarters on top decks. The largest spas have several treatment rooms, a sauna and a steam room or two, and full locker rooms with showers. On ships built pre-1990, the spas, like the gyms, are generally going to be small; the large spa on the *QE2* is an exception. Even most of the smaller upscale ships have some semblance of a spa and a beauty salon. Windstar Cruises' *Wind Surf* carries only 300 passengers but boasts a particularly big spa facility (not so on the other Windstar ships, though). As with gyms, you won't find spas at all on the smaller alternative ships.

Some of the best spas and fitness facilities at sea are on board Celebrity Cruises' vessels. Called the AquaSpa, these spacious health meccas are as pleasing to the

eye as they are functional. The focal point is a giant thalassotherapy pool, a bubbling cauldron of warm, soothing seawater that's a great place to relax before a massage. Other impressive spas can be found on Costa Cruise Lines' *CostaVictoria,* which includes such accoutrements as tile mosaics, rattan lounge chairs, and a small plunge pool; and *CostaAtlantica,* which offers a dozen treatment rooms and an indoor sunning area with a whirlpool. Cunard's brand new *Queen Mary 2* impressively has a 20,000-square-foot, two-deck spa operated by noted spa company Canyon Ranch, with a "health and wellness" crew of 50.

Spa treatments range in price from about $60 to over $150, plus the 10% to 15% tip that's expected (some lines add this on automatically) and can be charged to your onboard account. Celebrity and Windstar allow you to **prebook spa packages** with your travel agent, but appointment times cannot be reserved until you board the ship.

5 An Introduction to Shipboard Dining

Food takes on Fellini-esque proportions on cruise ships. With meals a major part of the cruise experience, they are served with much pomp and circumstance, particularly on the bigger ships.

Forget your standard breakfast, lunch, and dinner. You will be offered, on a daily basis, an early-riser's continental breakfast, choice of breakfast in the dining room or a lavish breakfast buffet, a mid-morning snack, lunch in the dining room or a lavish luncheon buffet, afternoon tea, dinner in the dining room or in an alternative venue such as an intimate, reservations-only restaurant or more casual Lido restaurant, and an unbelievable midnight buffet or trays of late-night snacks.

And if that's not enough, some ships also have pizza parlors, poolside grills, 24-hour room service, and specialty food venues such as caviar bars, ice-cream parlors, and gourmet coffee shops. And you may even be offered fresh fruit daily in your cabin.

DINNER IS SERVED

The nighttime meal on most ships is one of the main social events of the day. The table setup is quite formal, with china, silver, fresh flowers, and starched linens, and serving will be at a leisurely pace. You will likely sit with other passengers (tables for one or two are hard to come by) and should enjoy some lively conversation which no doubt will center on some of the sights you have visited that day.

On most ships, you'll find at least five courses, with three to six options for each course, and you can choose from a wide array of international fare like escargot, vichyssoise, veal scaloppini, poached salmon, prime rib, and pastas. There will also likely be **vegetarian choices** as well as **healthier entrees** that are lower in fat, calories, cholesterol, and sodium.

It's considered good etiquette to arrive at the dining room on time (on ships with open seating policies you can show up when you want within set hours), to show up dressed according to the dress code of the day, and to wait until everyone at your table has arrived before you order.

You are not required to order every course. Conversely, if two appetizers or main courses catch your fancy, you can order both. If you do not like something you ordered, send it back and ask for another selection.

DINNER TABLE DIVORCES

If you get stuck with a couple of yahoos who seem to offend every bone in your body or there just isn't any chemistry, no need to suffer in silence. It's best to explain to the maitre d' as courteously and as soon as possible that your table assignment simply won't do, and request a change. You will usually be accommodated (a greasing of the palm will help).

SPECIAL DIETS

If you follow any special diet, inform the cruise line as early as possible, preferably when booking your cruise. **Vegetarian dishes** and **kosher food** are commonly available, and almost all cruise lines now feature a selection of healthier, **lighter meals,** labeled as such on the menu. On all but the most cost-conscious lines, the kitchen usually tries to satisfy reasonable culinary requests.

CASUAL DINING

If you'd rather skip the formality of the main dining room, all but the tiniest ships serve breakfast and lunch in a casual **buffet-style cafe restaurant.** Usually located on the Lido Deck, with indoor and outdoor poolside seating, these restaurants serve an extensive spread of both hot and cold food items. On the megaships, nearby may be a **grill** where at lunch you can get hamburgers, hot dogs, and often chicken. Veggie burgers are also showing up regularly at the grills these days. On most ships, **breakfast and lunch buffets** are generally served for a 3- to 4-hour period, so guests can stroll in and out whenever they desire. Princess Cruises has the Lido cafe open around the clock on its newest ships.

If you're not in the mood for the fuss of formal dining in the evening, either, many big ships now offer dinner as well in the casual Lido restaurant (sometimes not every night). Most serve casual dinner buffet-style, but some do a combination of sit-down service and buffet. Wear what you want, stroll in when you please, and, in most cases, sit where you please (most are open seating). After soup and salad, two or three entrees are offered, like prime rib, salmon, or stir-fry, followed by dessert.

If you do want the fine dining and formality, but with fewer fellow diners in tow, several lines have added intimate, **reservations-only alternative restaurants,** usually seating less than 100. In some, but not all cases, there's a cover charge to dine in these special venues, usually $5–$25. (See specifics on dining options in the ship reviews in chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8.)

6 Onboard Shopping Opportunities

Even the smallest ships have at least a small shop on board selling T-shirts, sweatshirts, baseball caps, and the like bearing the cruise line's logo. The big new megaships, though, have the most extensive onboard shopping. Like mini malls, there may be as many as 10 different stores selling everything from **toiletries and sundries** like film, toothpaste, candy, and paperback books (and even condoms) to totes, T-shirts, mugs, toys, key chains, and other **cruise line logo souvenirs.** You'll find **formalwear** like sequined dresses and jackets, silk dresses and scarves, purses, satin shoes, cummerbunds, ties, and tuxedo shirts, as well as **perfume, cosmetics, jewelry** (costume and the real stuff), and **porcelain figurines.**

All merchandise sold on board while a ship is at sea is tax-free; to maintain that tax-free status, the shops are closed whenever a ship is in port. Though tax-free, prices aren't always deals, though some good deals can be had on alcohol, and by mid-cruise there are often good sales on a selection of T-shirts, tote bags,

and jewelry as well. Some ships stock **local arts and crafts items** at great prices. Things that usually cost you more on board than off are disposal cameras, sunscreen, and candy and snack foods. Prices on clothing and good jewelry vary.

7 Sundry Shipboard Services & Facilities

RELIGIOUS SERVICES

Some ships, including those in the Costa fleet, have priests on board who lead Catholic Mass. Most ships have a nondenominational service on Sunday and a Friday-night Jewish Sabbath service, usually run by a passenger. On holidays, whether Jewish or Christian, clergy is typically aboard large ships to lead services. The services are usually held in a library or conference room, although some ships have chapels, and the *QE2* has its own synagogue.

MEDICAL CARE

Unless you're on a very small ship, your vessel will have a medical facility staffed by a doctor and a nurse, ready to handle medical emergencies that may arise at sea. Some facilities are quite elaborate. The *Grand Princess* and *Star Princess,* for instance, have high-tech medical equipment that, using cameras and a live video system, links the ships' medical team to doctors at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles. The medical center will typically be open during set office hours, with the medical team available on a 24-hour basis to deal with emergencies (on some ships, the doctor can handle everything up to and including an appendectomy, but more typically, he or she dispenses seasickness shots and antibiotics and treats sprained muscles). If there is a major medical emergency, the passenger will be taken off the ship either at the nearest port or by helicopter.

If you have a chronic health problem, it's best to check with your doctor before booking your cruise; and if you have any specific needs, notify the cruise line in advance. This will ensure the ship's medical team is properly prepared to meet your needs.

GETTING THE NEWS

Most newer ships offer **CNN International** on their in-room TVs, and nearly every ship will post the latest news from the wire services outside the purser's



Seasickness, or How to Avoid Getting Green Around the Gills

Unless you're particularly prone to seasickness, you probably don't need to worry much if you're on a big ship (small ships can be bumpier). But if you are, there are medications that can help, including Dramamine, Bonine, and Marezine (although it's recommended that if you use these medications you not drink alcohol; and they can make you drowsy). All can be bought over the counter, and most ships have supplies available on board—the purser's office may even give them out free. Another option is the Transderm patch for seasickness, available by prescription only, which goes behind your ear and time-releases medication. The patch can be worn for up to 3 days, but comes with a slew of side effect warnings. Some people have also had success in curbing seasickness by using ginger capsules available at health-food stores, and with the acupressure wristbands available at most pharmacies.

office. Some lines even excerpt information from leading newspapers and each day deliver the printouts to your cabin.

STAYING IN TOUCH

In addition to the telephone in your cabin (which will cost you big bucks if you use it to call home), you may be able to send **faxes** home via your ship's business center. And most ships offer **e-mail.** In some cases, the ship has a real Internet cafe setup where you can go on the Internet and check your mail at home. In other cases, however, you set up a shipboard account, and while you can send and receive e-mail from that account, you can't actually get on the Internet. Standard fees for e-mail are 50¢–$1.50 a minute (keep in mind you may be better off finding an Internet cafe at one of the ports of call).

Where the ship does offer e-mail, you can also usually send your friends back home nifty **e-postcards.** For those into more traditional modes of communication, the purser's office on your ship should have **postcards,** local stamps (U.S. stamps don't work in Europe), and a mailbox that is emptied at each port of call.

8 Wrapping Up Your Cruise—Debarkation Concerns

Hardly anybody likes to get off the ship at the end of his or her cruise, but it's part of the deal. To make it easier, here are a few matters you'll have to take care of before heading back to home sweet home.

THE DEBARKATION TALK

On the last full day of your cruise, the cruise director will offer a debarkation talk covering areas such as tipping, settling your onboard account, packing, dealing with Customs and Immigration, and debarkation procedures, all as they apply to your specific ship. You or a member of your party should attend the talk, particularly if you are a first-time cruiser. You might also be able to catch a broadcast of the session on your in-room TV, and procedures will also be printed in your daily bulletin, but the talk is your chance to ask any questions you might have. Some lines even offer a prize drawing to encourage your attendance at the session.

TIPPING

Tipping is an area that some people find confusing. First, let's establish that on almost all lines (the exceptions being the ritzy lines of Seabourn, Radisson Seven Seas, Silversea, and Norwegian Coastal Voyages) you are expected to tip the crew—in particular your cabin steward, waiter, and busboy. Not to tip is bad form, since these people rely on gratuities for the better part of their income. How much you tip is totally up to you, though the cruise line will make suggestions in the daily bulletin and in the cruise director's debarkation briefing. Keep in mind that these are just suggestions.

Generally speaking, each passenger should tip his or her cabin steward and waiter a minimum of about $3.50 per day each, and the busboy $1.50–$2. In practice, many people nudge it up a bit more so the total tips are $10–$12 a day per person. On some European lines, suggested tips may be lower (Europeans are not as used to tipping as much as Americans do). On some ships you are also encouraged to tip the waiter and maitre d', plus your butler, if you have one. In an attempt to make the whole process less confusing, Norwegian Cruise Line and Princess Cruises add tips of $10 per passenger per day automatically to shipboard accounts (you can adjust the amount up or down as you see fit). It's our guess other lines may follow suit.

Tip-Free Cruising

A few lines—for example, Holland America Line and Windstar, have a no-tipping-required policy, meaning you're under no obligation, though staff on these ships will gladly accept tips if proffered. Some other lines, however, have a no-tipping-allowed policy that is strictly enforced.

Note: The above tipping policy is standard for most cruise lines. Guidelines for cruise lines with alternative policies are listed in the "Services" sections of individual ship reviews in part 2.

Tips to the crew are paid at the end of the cruise, and you may have to pay tips in cash (U.S. dollars are okay), in which case the ship will probably offer you envelopes you can distribute to the appropriate crew person. Some lines alternatively (and in our opinion, more conveniently) let you put the tips on your shipboard charge account. Occasionally, tips are pooled and distributed among the crew after the cruise (in which case you just put a lump sum into the pot).

Bar bills automatically include a 10% to 15% tip, but if a bartender or wine steward has served you exceptionally well, you can slip him or her a bill, too.

Don't tip the captain or other officers, since they're salaried employees, and tipping them is gauche, if not embarrassing.

If a porter carries your bags at the pier, he'll likely expect a tip.

SETTLING UP

Your shipboard account will close in the wee hours before departure, but prior to that time you will receive a preliminary bill in your cabin. If you are settling your account with your credit card, you don't have to do anything but make sure all the charges are correct. If there is a problem, you will have to report to the purser's office, where you will likely encounter long lines.

If you are paying by cash or traveler's check, you will be asked to settle your account during either the day or night before you leave the ship. This will require that you report to the purser's office.

A final invoice will be delivered to your room before departure.

Keeping receipts for shipboard purchases during your cruise will help you with your tallying efforts, and also ensure you're not surprised when the bill arrives.

PACKING UP

With thousands of suitcases to deal with, big ships have established the routine of requiring guests to pack the night before departure. You will be asked to leave your bags in the hallway before you retire for the night (or usually by midnight). The bags will be picked up overnight and removed from the ship before passengers are allowed to disembark. (If you party late and end up putting your bags out after other bags on your deck have already been collected, advise the purser's office so they can send someone to get your bags; if you don't leave your bags in the hall you will have to carry them off the ship yourself.) You'll see them again in the cruise terminal, where they'll most likely be arranged by deck number.

It's important to make sure your bags are tagged with the **luggage tags** given to you by the cruise line. These tags are color-coded to indicate deck number and disembarkation order. If you need more tags, ask your cabin steward.

A good rule of thumb is to begin packing before dinner. Usually the last night of your cruise will be a casual night to make things easier. When packing, remember to leave out any clothes and toiletries you will need the next day, and don't pack your valuables, breakables, travel documents, or medication. Make sure everything you keep out fits in your overnight bag.

Pack all your purchases made during the trip in one suitcase. This way you can easily retrieve them if you are stopped at Customs (see below).

DEBARKATION ORDER

You'll know it's the day you have to get off the ship because loudspeaker announcements will start blaring particularly early in the morning.

You won't be able to get off the ship until it is cleared by Customs and other authorities, a process that usually takes 90 minutes.

Even so, in most cases you will be asked to vacate your cabin early in the morning (as early as 8am) to give the crew time to prepare the space for the next load of passengers. Before you leave the cabin, check all the drawers to make sure you don't leave anything behind.

On disembarkation day, breakfast may be served earlier than usual, and there may be limited room service or no room service at all. Check your daily bulletin for details.

It takes about 2 hours to get everyone off the ship, and people will be given departure numbers. Those with earlier flights will be allowed to leave first. Everyone will want to leave the ship at the same time, but unless you have an early number, you don't have to rush. Grab a book and head up to the deck, catch a movie or other ship offering, or find another way to occupy yourself. Clogging the hallways doesn't help anyone get off faster.

If things drag on and you're concerned about missing your flight, tell a crewmember.

MORE BAGGAGE

If you booked your air through the cruise line and are heading right home, you will collect your bags—there should be porters to help—and proceed to the bus to the airport.

If you booked your own air, you're on your own. You can retrieve your bags—again, there should be porters to help—and catch a cab to the airport or your next destination.

If you're on a post-cruise tour, special instructions will be given by the cruise line.

CLEARING CUSTOMS & IMMIGRATION

Make sure you allow enough time at the European airport to check in, collect any value-added tax refunds owed you on the purchases you have made (see chapter 3 for more on VAT), and clear Immigration (you'll need to show your passport).

You may also want to allow time to check out the airport's duty-free offerings.

When you return to the U.S., you will again have to show your passport at Immigration, collect your bags, and clear Customs. You will be handed a Customs form on the plane to fill out.

CUSTOMS **U.S. citizens** who have been away for at least 48 hours are allowed to bring back, once every 30 days, $800 worth of merchandise duty-free. You'll be charged a flat rate of 4% duty on the next $1,000 worth of purchases. Be sure

to have your receipts handy. On mailed gifts, the duty-free limit is $200. With some exceptions, you cannot bring fresh fruits and vegetables into the United States. For specifics on what you can bring back, download the invaluable free pamphlet *Know Before You Go* online at **www.customs.gov** (click on "Travel," and then click on "Know Before You Go Online Brochure"), or contact the **U.S. Customs Service,** 1300 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20229 (✆ **877/287-8867**) and request the pamphlet.

FOR BRITISH CITIZENS Citizens of the U.K. who are **returning from a European Union (EU) country** will go through a separate Customs exit (called the "Blue Exit") especially for EU travelers. In essence, there is no limit on what you can bring back from an EU country, as long as the items are for personal use (this includes gifts), and you have already paid the necessary duty and tax. However, Customs law sets out guidance levels. If you bring in more than these levels, you may be asked to prove that the goods are for your own use. Guidance levels on goods bought in the EU for your own use are 3,200 cigarettes, 200 cigars, 400 cigarillos, 3 kilograms of smoking tobacco, 10 liters of spirits, 90 liters of wine, 20 liters of fortified wine (such as port or sherry), and 110 liters of beer.

U.K. citizens returning from **a non-EU country** have a Customs allowance of: 200 cigarettes; 50 cigars; 250 grams of smoking tobacco; 2 liters of still table wine; 1 liter of spirits or strong liqueurs (over 22% volume); 2 liters of fortified wine, sparkling wine, or other liqueurs; 60cc (ml) of perfume; 250cc (ml) of toilet water; and £145 worth of all other goods, including gifts and souvenirs. People under 17 cannot have the tobacco or alcohol allowance. For more information, contact HM Customs & Excise at ✆ **0845/010-9000** (from outside the U.K., 020/8929-0152), or consult their website at www.hmce.gov.uk.

FOR CANADIAN CITIZENS For a clear summary of rules, write for the booklet *I Declare,* issued by the **Canada Customs and Revenue Agency** (✆ **800/461-9999** in Canada, or 204/983-3500; www.ccra-adrc.gc.ca). Canada allows its citizens a C$750 exemption, and you're allowed to bring back duty-free one carton of cigarettes, 1 can of tobacco, 40 imperial ounces of liquor, and 50 cigars. In addition, you're allowed to mail gifts to Canada valued at less than C$60 a day, provided they're unsolicited and don't contain alcohol or tobacco (write on the package "Unsolicited gift, under $60 value"). All valuables should be declared on the Y-38 form before departure from Canada, including serial numbers of valuables you already own, such as expensive foreign cameras. ***Note:*** The C$750 exemption can only be used once a year and only after an absence of 7 days.

FOR AUSTRALIAN CITIZENS The duty-free allowance is A$400 or, for those under 18, A$200. Citizens can bring in 250 cigarettes or 250 grams of loose tobacco, and 1,125 milliliters of alcohol. If you're returning with valuables you already own, such as foreign-made cameras, you should file form B263. A helpful brochure available from Australian consulates or Customs offices is

Is the Earth Moving, or Is It Me?

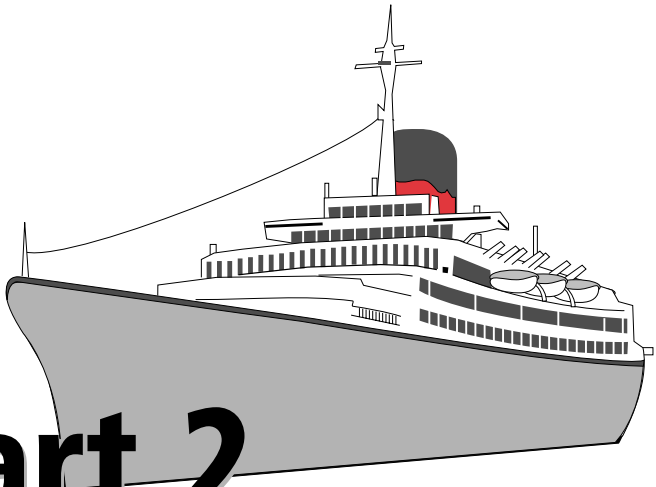
When you get off the ship, and especially when you close your eyes, you might experience a feeling of rocking, as if you're still on the water. Don't worry—this is perfectly normal and should go away by the next day.

No Cuban Cigars

Got a hankering for those Cuban cigars you'll see for sale throughout Europe? Buy them to enjoy in Europe, but don't try to bring them home. If the government can make a case that you bought, sold, traded, or otherwise engaged in transactions involving illegally imported Cuban cigars, you may face civil penalties of up to $55,000, and even criminal charges.

Know Before You Go. For more information, call the **Australian Customs Service** at ✆ **1300/363-263,** or log on to www.customs.gov.au.

FOR NEW ZEALAND CITIZENS The duty-free allowance is NZ$700. Citizens over 17 can bring in 200 cigarettes, 50 cigars, or 250 grams of tobacco (or a mixture of all three if their combined weight doesn't exceed 250g); plus 4.5 liters of wine and beer, or 1.125 liters of liquor. New Zealand currency does not carry import or export restrictions. Fill out a certificate of export, listing the valuables you are taking out of the country; that way, you can bring them back without paying duty. Most questions are answered in a free pamphlet available at New Zealand consulates and Customs offices: *New Zealand Customs Guide for Travellers, Notice no. 4.* For more information, contact **New Zealand Customs,** The Customhouse, 17–21 Whitmore St., Box 2218, Wellington (✆ **04/473-6099** or 0800/428-786; www.customs.govt.nz).



Part 2

The Cruise Lines & Their Ships

Detailed, in-depth reviews of all the cruise lines in Europe, with discussions of the experiences they offer and the lowdown on their ships.

About the Ratings

5 The American Mainstream Lines

6 The European Lines

7 The Luxury & Ultra-Luxury Lines

8 The Alternative Lines

9 River Cruises

About the Ratings

The cruise industry today offers such a profusion of experiences that it makes comparing all lines and ships by the same set of criteria impossible. The typical, across-the-board ratings used by most cruise guidebooks don't offer the kind of comparisons you need to make your decision. For that reason, our "Frommer's Ratings" system, based on the classic customer satisfaction survey, judges the cruise lines on the following important considerations, rating them either poor, fair, good, excellent, or outstanding.

- Enjoyment Factor
- Dining
- Activities
- Children's Program
- Entertainment
- Service
- Overall Value

Again, though, you can't compare the experiences you'll have aboard an ultra-luxury line like Seabourn, an exploratory alternative line like Lindblad Expeditions, and a megaship line like Royal Caribbean. They're different animals. For that reason, we've graded the cruise lines on a sliding scale, comparing ships only with the other ships in their category—mainstream with mainstream, luxury with luxury, alternative with alternative.

Note that since the river ships and barges described in chapter 9 are marketed mostly through brokers rather than cruise lines that strive to present a consistent product identity, categorical ratings for these vessels are not possible.

THE SHIP REVIEWS

We've listed some of the ships' vital statistics—ship size, year built and most recently refurbished, number of cabins, number of officers and crew—to help you compare, then rated such things as cabin comfort, decor, and so on, on a scale of 1 to 5, which you can read just like the Frommer's Ratings at the beginning of each line review (in other words, 1 = poor, 2 = fair, 3 = good, 4 = excellent, 5 = outstanding).

Size is listed in tons. Note that these are not actual measures of weight, but gross register tons (GRTs), which is a measure of the interior space used to produce revenue on a ship. One GRT equals 100 cubic feet of enclosed, revenue-generating space.

CRUISE PRICES

As we discussed in chapter 2, rates listed in the cruise line brochures are inflated and you can expect to pay anywhere from 10% to 60% less if you book your cruise early (generally 3–6 months in advance). The rates listed in this book are the starting rates listed in the cruise lines' brochures. We have not added in any discounts that may be applied.

In each ship review, we offer prices for a 7-night cruise (in cases where only longer cruises are available that is so noted, and priced accordingly) for the following three basic types of accommodations:

- inside cabins (without windows)
- outside cabins (with windows)
- suites

Remember that cruise ships generally have several different categories of cabins within each of these three basic divisions, all priced differently, which is why you'll find a range of prices in each category. In general, the cost of a top-level inside cabin will probably be very close to the rate for a low-level outside cabin, and the cost of a top-level outside may be very close to the rate for a low-level suite.

Rates listed include port charges and taxes unless otherwise noted. Other extras that are included, such as airfare and hotel stays, are also noted.

Cruise lines have various ways of expressing the number of days or nights of the itinerary. When calculating the number of days, we have eliminated the disembarkation day, since you usually leave the ship in the morning. So when we describe an itinerary as 7-day, that means you spend 7 nights on the ship.

5

The American Mainstream Lines

The American mainstream ships offer something for almost everyone—all ages, backgrounds, and interests. The more elegant and refined of the lot are commonly referred to as premium, a notch up from mass-market in the sophistication department. Of the ships we review below, Celebrity, Holland America, Oceania, and Princess are premium lines, while Norwegian and Royal Caribbean are mass-market lines and Orient falls somewhere in between.

Because the mainstream category is the most popular, it's seen the most growth, innovation, and investment in recent years. This is the category where the megaships reside, those hulking floating resorts that offer the widest variety of activities and entertainment. The mainstream ships as a whole offer a broad range of cabins—outside (with windows), inside (no windows), suites, and cabins with private verandas. They have both formal and informal dining options, varied entertainment (heavy on the Vegas-style stuff), and tons of activities. Overall, the atmosphere is very social. Even the smaller mainstream ships, like those of Orient Lines, offer lots of choice in accommodations, dining venues, activities, and entertainment.

When these ships, especially the larger ones, visit ports, they attract plenty of attention. Since these ships mean so much to the local economy of the places they visit, they are often greeted with marching bands and onlookers waving from the shore—festive for both passengers and locals.

DRESS CODES On most week-long cruises aboard mass-market and premium ships, there are 2 formal nights calling for dark suits or tuxedos for men and cocktail dresses, sequined numbers, or fancy pantsuits for women. The other 5 nights are some combination of semi-formal and casual, and call for suits or sport jackets and slacks for men, and dresses, pantsuits, or skirts and tops for women. Daytime is casual. But keep in mind there are exceptions—Norwegian Cruise Line schedules only one formal night on a weeklong voyage, and Oceania has a casual dress policy and no formal nights (at night on Oceania men mostly wear jackets with or without ties and women get a little gussied up). On all ships, guests are asked not to wear shorts and T-shirts in the formal dining rooms at night.

Cruise Lines Reviewed in this Chapter

- Celebrity Cruises
- Holland America Line
- Norwegian Cruise Line
- Oceania Cruises
- Orient Lines
- Princess Cruises
- Royal Caribbean International

1 Celebrity Cruises

SHIPS IN EUROPE Constellation • Millennium • Galaxy

1050 Caribbean Way, Miami, FL 33132. ✆ **800/327-6700** or 305/539-6000. Fax 800/722-5329. www.celebrity-cruises.com.

Celebrity is among the very best of the American mainstream lines. With some of the most elegant mainstream ships in the industry, Celebrity offers the best of both worlds: a refined cruise experience with pampering and fine food, yet one that is fun at a price average people can afford.

Each of the line's ships is spacious, glamorous, and comfortable, mixing sleekly modern and updated classic styles, and throwing in astoundingly cutting-edge art collections to boot.

The genteel service on board is exceptional for a mainstream product. Staff members are exceedingly polite and professional, and contribute to the elegant shipboard mood. Dining-wise, Celebrity shines, offering innovative cuisine with a French influence that's a cut above what's offered by most other mainstream lines (though not as good as luxury lines).

There's plenty to do on Celebrity ships, but the focus is on mellower, more relaxing pursuits. Innovative programming helps set the line apart from the pack. Niceties such as roving a cappella bands and magicians who sidle up to your table to entertain during pre- and post-dinner drinks lend a personal touch.

Celebrity gets the "best of" nod in a lot of categories: The AquaSpas, with their indoor thalassotherapy pools, are the best at sea; the art collections the most compelling; the cigar bars the most plush; and the onboard activities among the most varied. Cabins are good size (there is really not a bad cabin in the house) and Celebrity pampers suite guests with butler service. Guests in any cabin can get in-cabin pizza delivery.

Pros

- **Spectacular spas and gyms.** Beautiful to look at and well stocked.
- **Focus on food.** Cuisine is tops among mainstream ships.
- **Innovative everything.** Entertainment, art, cigar bars, service, spas, and cuisine are some of the most creative in the industry.

Cons

- **Semi-private verandas.** Many of the huge "private" verandas are really only semi-private (keep that robe on!).
- **Occasional crowding.** Pack a couple thousand people onto a ship (pretty much any ship) and you'll get crowds sometimes, such as at buffets and when debarking.

Compared with other American mainstream lines, here's how Celebrity rates:

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Outstanding
Enjoyment Factor					✓
Dining					✓
Activities				✓	
Children's Program			✓		
Entertainment				✓	
Service					✓
Overall Value					✓

THE FLEET

The roots of the line go back to the Greek shipping company Chandris, although Celebrity is now owned by Royal Caribbean. With their crisp navy-blue and white hulls and rakishly angled funnel decorated with a giant X (actually the Greek letter for ch, as in Chandris, the line's founding family), the profiles of Celebrity's ships rank among the industry's most distinctive. Inside, the ships are just as innovative and modern. In particular, they feature an impressive art collection, with works by artists including Robert Rauschenberg, Damien Hirst, Jasper Johns, David Hockney, Pablo Picasso, Andy Warhol, and Helen Frankenthaler.

As the line never tires of pointing out, it has among the youngest fleets in the industry—all of its ships having been built since 1990. The line's ships in Europe this year include some of its newest—the 77,000-ton, 1,870-passenger ***Galaxy*** (debuted in 1996), and the virtual twin ships, the 1,950-passenger, 91,000-ton ***Millennium*** (2000) and ***Constellation*** (2002). With their distinctive exterior, large cabin size, innovative spa, and fine dining, there's no mistaking for which line these ships sail.

PASSENGER PROFILE

Celebrity vessels attract a wide range of ages and backgrounds, although the common denominator among passengers is that they want a toned-down, elegant brand of fun cruise: lots of activity, without the wild or nutty atmosphere you get aboard some other megaships. And they want (and get) reasonable pricing. The line focuses on middle- to upper-middle-income cruisers. The average age in 2002 on all Celebrity ships was 49, although Europe tends to skew a tad older.

Celebrity entered the Europe market just 5 years ago, first with the *Mercury* and then with the *Millennium,* attracting mostly Americans but some European passengers as well.

DINING

Celebrity has poured lots of time and money into creating a culinary format that consistently provides well-orchestrated, well-presented, and good-tasting meals.

In the mid-1990s, the line signed on as its culinary consultant internationally known chef **Michel Roux.** His successes include direction of Le Gavroche, one of London's best restaurants, and the Waterside Inn (in Bray, Berkshire), which has attracted the attention of well-heeled European foodies—including the queen of England—for many years. While some people consider Roux's cuisine a bit overrated and only slightly better than that of other mainstream lines, we personally find it quite tasty.

A dinner menu is likely to feature something along the lines of escargots a la bourguignon, pheasant mousseline with blueberry vinaigrette, pan-fried salmon with parsley potatoes, pad Thai (noodles and veggies in a peanut sauce), tournedos Rossini with foie gras and Madeira sauce, or a well-seasoned slab of prime rib with horseradish and baked potato. At every meal, Celebrity also offers **lighter "spa" fare,** like a seafood medley in saffron sauce or oven-roasted rack of veal with steamed veggies (calories, fat, cholesterol, and sodium are listed on the back of the menu), and **vegetarian entrees** such as curried Indian vegetables or linguini with shiitake mushrooms and herbs.

While the *Constellation* and *Millennium* have nautical-themed reservations-only restaurants (for a $25 cover charge), there is no comparable eating place on the *Galaxy,* the ship having been built before reservations-only rooms became

Tips Dine Ashore

Celebrity, in partnership with *Gourmet* magazine, offers two land-based dining programs. The first, Gourmet Valet, allows passengers to browse the menus of in-port restaurants chosen by the magazine and then make table reservations through the ship's shore excursions desk (which can also help arrange transportation to your restaurant of choice). The other program, Gourmet Privileges, allows Celebrity's Sea and Stay package cruisers (pre- and post-cruise stay-over buyers) to enjoy a complimentary glass of champagne or a free dessert at *Gourmet*-recommended restaurants.

the vogue. Its Oasis Café, however, an indoor 400-seat multilevel facility, offers a casual alternative to the main restaurant.

An alternative **casual dining venue** is also available on the other two ships in the Lido restaurant. Serving a simple five-course dinner at no additional charge between 6:30 and 8:30pm by reservation only, it's a good place to bring the kids, and a good option if you want to skip the hustle and bustle (and formality) of the main restaurant. It's open every night but formal nights. The menu features options such as fresh fruit cocktail, soup du jour, salad, and entrees like pasta, broiled salmon steak, spit-roasted chicken, and grilled sirloin steak, as well as pizza and dessert selections.

In common with other Celebrity ships, the three in Europe this year will feature at their lunch buffets favorites like salads and stir-fries, grilled hamburgers and hot dogs, fish and chips, cheeses and breads, omelets, pizza, smoked salmon, shrimp cocktail, and French onion soup.

A nice touch on all formal nights is a late-night culinary soirée known as **Gourmet Bites,** where a series of upscale canapés and hors d'oeuvres are butler-served in the public lounges between midnight and 1am. On other nights, **themed midnight buffets** might offer Oriental, Italian, Tex-Mex, or tropical smorgasbords, with a spread of fancifully carved fruits.

Chef Roux's wine selections are offered in a wide price range to suit every budget. Interestingly, a few of the wines featured on board are produced by French vineyards with which Roux has a direct link and, in some cases, of which he is the owner.

Room service is available 24 hours a day on all the ships and offers a limited menu with complete breakfasts, hot and cold sandwiches, pizzas, salads, desserts, and beverages. **Gourmet pizzas** are available from room service from 3 to 7pm and 10pm to 1am.

ACTIVITIES

On Celebrity, there's a lot to do and a lot, well, not to do.

If you like to stay busy, activities during days at sea are fairly standardized across the fleet, and may include one of the fascinating **enrichment lectures** often offered by experts on topics such as personal investing, handwriting analysis, and body language. There are also the tried-and-true wine tastings, horse racing, bingo, art auctions, trivia games, arts and crafts, spa and salon demonstrations, and line-dancing lessons. During days at sea, a live pop band plays a couple of sets on the Pool Deck.

If you prefer curling up with a good book in some quiet nook, you'll have no problem finding one. On the *Constellation* and *Millennium,* you can grab a

lounge chair at the spas' thalassotherapy pool or duck into one of the many lounges, including the quiet, clubbish Michael's Club cigar bar, which offers the atmosphere of a British men's club—a unisex facility, of course.

Managed by Steiner—as are the spas on most other ships—Celebrity **spas** offer more exotic treatments than some of their competitors. Options include mud packs, herbal steam baths, and a variety of water-based treatments involving jet massages and "aquameditation," in which you're caressed by light, whirling showers while lying on a soft mat. Certain procedures are offered for couples, whereby you and your significant other can apply medicinal muds to each other and share an herbal steam bath. The whole shebang ends with a warm shower and the application of an aromatic "potion" to the skin. Exotic, huh? If that doesn't get you in the mood for romance, nothing will!

The three Europe ships have Internet cafes, with access available for 95¢ a minute. There are no self-service laundry rooms, but laundry service is available.

CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS

Celebrity is a line that pampers kids as well as adults, especially during the summer months and holidays. Each ship the line has in Europe has a **playroom** (called the Ship Mates Fun Factory), a wading pool, and **supervised activities** offered whenever 12 or more kids are on board. There is also private and group **babysitting.**

Kids' activities are geared to those 3 to 17. Those ages 3 to 6, dubbed "Ship Mates," can enjoy treasure hunts, clown parties, T-shirt painting, dancing, movies, ship tours, and ice-cream-sundae-making parties. "Cadets," ages 7 to 9, have T-shirt painting, scavenger hunts, board games, arts and crafts, ship tours, and computer games. Those 10 to 12 may want to join the "Ensign" activities, such as karaoke, computer games, board games, trivia contests, arts and crafts, movies, and pizza parties. For teens there's an attractive teen disco/hangout room and activities like pool games and trivia contests for those willing to participate.

On formal nights, a complimentary **parents' night out** program allows mom and dad to enjoy dinner alone while the kids are invited to a pizza party with the counselors. **Group babysitting** (for ages 3–12) is $6 per child per hour. **Private in-cabin babysitting** by a crewmember is available on a limited basis for $8 per hour for up to two children (kids must be at least 6 months old); make your request 24 hours in advance.

ENTERTAINMENT

This line offers a varied selection when it comes to entertainment, including some innovations. For instance, on many cruises a **roving a cappella group** or **wandering magician** performs in lounges and public areas. You'll typically find a harpist playing at dinnertime in the atrium, and sometimes a classical trio will serenade guests.

In the high tech, state-of-the-art theatre, there are the usual **Broadway-style** musicals led by a sock-it-to-'em soloist or two and a team of lip-syncing dancers in full Vergas-esque regalia. Other nights in the theatre, you'll find **magicians, comedians, cabaret acts,** and **passenger talent shows.** If you want something more cozy, retreat to the **piano bar** or hear live jazz or music from the big-band era in one of the lounges. The late-night crowd can enjoy disco dancing, usually until 3am. Other offerings include karaoke, and the showing of new-release movies.

Celebrity Fleet Itineraries

Ship	Home Ports & Season	Itinerary
Constellation	**12-day Scandinavia/ Russia,** Dover(England), Stockholm (Sweden) (May–Aug); **14-night British Isles/Norwegian Fjords,** Dover (July)	**12-day Scandinavia/Russia:** Port calls may include Oslo (Norway), Helsinki (Finland), St. Petersburg (Russia), Tallinn (Estonia), Warnemunde (Germany), Copenhagen (Denmark), Stockholm (Sweden), Riga (Latvia), and Gdansk (Poland); **12-day British Isles/Norwegian Fjords:** Port calls include Le Havre (France), Ringaskiddy and Dublin (Ireland), Glasgow (Scotland), Olden, Geiranger, Hellesylt, and Bergen (Norway), Copenhagen (Denmark), and Zeebrugge (Belgium)
Galaxy	**10- and 11-day Med,** Rome (May–Aug)	**10- and 11-day Med:** Port calls include Naples (Italy), Santorini, Mykonos, Athens, and Rhodes (Greece), Istanbul and Kusadasi (Turkey)
Millennium	**12-day Med,** Barcelona (Spain) or Venice (Italy) (May–Oct)	**12-day Med:** Port calls may include Villefranche (France), Livorno, Rome, and Naples (Italy), Athens, Mykonos, and Santorini (Greece), and Dubrovnik (Croatia)

SERVICE

Service is polite, attentive, cheerful, and especially professional. Waiters have a poised, upscale-hotel air about them, and are able to think on their feet. On one sailing, when Fran mentioned to her cabin steward that she was disappointed that there were chairs but no deck chair on her cabin balcony, he promptly snuck one off the Pool Deck for her. There are very professional sommeliers in the dining room. In the Lido breakfast and lunch buffet restaurants, waiters are on hand to carry passengers' trays from the buffet line to a table of their choice.

If you occupy a suite on any of the ships, you'll get a tuxedo-clad **personal butler** who serves afternoon tea and complimentary hors d'oeuvres from 6 to 8pm, bringing them right to your cabin. If you ask, he'll handle your laundry, shine your shoes, make sewing repairs, deliver messages, and do many other errands and favors. For instance, on a recent sailing Fran's butler brought her mother a glass of juice each night, which she needed to take her medication. Your butler will serve you a full five-course dinner if you'd rather dine in your cabin 1 night, and if you're in the mood to compile a guest list and pay for the drinks and hors d'oeuvres everyone will consume, your butler will even organize a cocktail party for you and your list of cruising friends, either in your suite or in any of several suitable public areas on board the ship.

Other hedonistic treats bestowed upon suite guests include a bottle of champagne on arrival, personalized stationery, terry-cloth robes, a Celebrity tote bag, oversized bath towels, priority check-in and debarkation, express luggage delivery at embarkation, and complimentary use of the soothing thalassotherapy pool. Suite guests can even get an in-cabin massage daily (for a fee) between the hours of 7am and 8pm.

Galaxy

The Verdict

While it may be the oldest of the three Celebrity ships in Europe this year, the *Galaxy* is an attractive, spacious vessel that more than holds its own with its bigger, younger fleet mates.



Galaxy *(photo: Celebrity Cruises)*

Specifications

Size (in tons)	77,713	Officers	Greek
Number of Cabins	935	Crew	908 (Int'l)
Number of Outside Cabins	639	Passenger/Crew Ratio	2 to 1
Cabins with Verandas	220	Year Launched	1996
Number of Passengers	1,870	Last Major Refurbishment	N/A

Frommer's Ratings (Scale of 1–5)

Cabin Comfort & Amenities	5	Dining Options	4
Ship Cleanliness & Maintenance	4	Gym & Spa Facilities	5
Public Comfort & Space	5	Children's Facilities	4
Decor	5	Enjoyment Factor	5

The *Galaxy* is elegant, with sleek, classic lines—a handsome ship viewed from any direction. Its open decks are wide and spacious, allowing passengers to avoid that over-crowded feeling that's liable to occur on some vessels this size. It was built at the Joseph L. Meyer Shipyard in Papenberg, Germany, and (for the technically-inclined) was the first major ship put together using laser welding technology.

Cabins & Rates

Cabin	Brochure Rates*	Bathtub	Fridge	Hair Dryer	Sitting Area	TV
Inside	$1,300–$1,500	no	yes	yes	no	yes
Outside	$2,200–$2,400	no	yes	yes	yes	yes
Suite	$3,500–$9,300	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

**Rates for 10-day Med cruise*

CABINS Standard staterooms measure 172 square feet—not a bad size, probably a little bigger than the industry average. All rooms have generous bathrooms and showers (the suites have showers and bathtubs), hair dryers, safes, minibars, and fridges. They also have interactive TVs that allow guests to order movies on demand, play a few casino-style games (billed to your room account, of course), reserve shore excursions, and buy merchandise from the ship's boutiques. The rooms are handsomely done in beiges and pastels. The standard cabins offer enough hanging and drawer space for the ship's 10-night European cruises—but only just!

The ship offers four suite categories ranging up to the two 1,219-square-foot Penthouse Suites. All four types boast whirlpool tubs, marble bathrooms, 29-inch television sets (except the Penthouse Suites, where it's a 32-in. set!), VCRs, separate dining area, walk-in closets, and butler service. The veranda on each ranges up to 179 square feet. The suites feature mahogany and marble flooring, anigre wood paneling, and leather upholstery.

Eight cabins are wheelchair accessible.

PUBLIC AREAS Designed by an international team of 12 architects, the *Galaxy* is handsome both inside and out. Throughout the ship, there are inviting social gathering places, ranging from the intimate (seating for 60) Tastings coffee bar to the fine 925-seat Celebrity Theater, the main showroom. Our particular favorite is Michael's Club, a cigar lounge that has become a signature feature of Celebrity ships. By day, the club offers a quiet, luxurious spot in which to read or talk. At night, the environment is livelier, with antique humidors brought to the table for a showy presentation of fine cigars. The club seats just 30 people and if you're averse to cigars and cigar smoke, you might not want to be in that number! The Savoy Night Club has a distinctive Casablanca-themed motif, which puts one in mind of Rick's cafe in the movie. One almost expects Humphrey Bogart or Claude Rains ("I'm shocked, Rick, shocked, to find that gambling is going on here!") to pop up at any moment. Speaking of gambling, the *Galaxy's* Fortune's Casino offers blackjack at eight tables, three stud poker tables, two roulette wheels, a craps area, and 160 slot machines.

Elsewhere on the ship, there is an observation gallery, the Stratosphere Lounge, equipped with telescopes for viewing the passing scenery through the 15-foot high picture windows. Rendezvous Square, adjoining the ship's Orion Restaurant, the main dining room, is an excellent place to get together with friends for a before-dinner drink and conversation.

ALTERNATIVE DINING *Galaxy* is not as jam-packed with restaurants as some newer ships. Essentially, there's only the Oasis Café, on the pool deck topsides, which seats 400 and offers a choice of four buffet tables at breakfast and lunch and serves pizza and ice cream from midafternoon until early evening and then again in the late evening. The room also hosts *Galaxy's* spectacular midnight buffets.

POOL, FITNESS & SPA FACILITIES *Galaxy's* AquaSpa, created in the style of a Japanese bathhouse, features a 115,000-gallon Thalassotherapy pool, hydrotherapy baths, hydrojet massage, seaweed wrap treatments, holistic water treatments, and meditation instruction. Up to 40 guests at a time can attend aerobics and body toning classes in the ship's gym and fitness area. The facility features exercise bikes, weight benches and machines, cardiovascular equipment, rowing machines, and more. The ship has five pools, including one with a retractable roof and one for children. Four outdoor whirlpools round out the ship's pool complement. Elsewhere on the vessel, you'll find a jogging track, shuffleboard and volleyball courts, ping pong tables, and a golf simulator.

Millennium • Constellation

The Verdict

These two, Celebrity's newest and largest ships, weighing in at 91,000 tons and carrying 1,950 guests apiece, offer a host of onboard activities and entertainment options, expanding on the line's core strengths of relaxed elegance, fine food, exceptional spa facilities, and modern flair.



Millennium *(photo: Celebrity Cruises)*

Specifications

Size (in tons)	91,000	Officers	Greek
Number of Cabins	975	Crew	999 (Int'l)
Number of Outside Cabins	780	Passenger/Crew Ratio	2 to 1
Cabins with Verandas	580	Year Launched	2000/2002
Number of Passengers	1,950	Last Major Refurbishment	N/A

Frommer's Ratings (Scale of 1–5)

Cabin Comfort & Amenities	5	Dining Options	5
Ship Cleanliness & Maintenance	5	Gym & Spa Facilities	5
Public Comfort & Space	5	Children's Facilities	4
Decor	5	Enjoyment Factor	5

In creating this new class of ships, Celebrity took the best ideas from the wonderful *Century, Galaxy,* and *Mercury* and ratcheted them up, in terms of both scale and number: bigger ships, bigger spas and theaters, more veranda cabins, more dining options, more shopping, more lounges, and more sports and exercise facilities, plus more of the same great service, cuisine, and high-style onboard art. Plus, they have state-of-the-art gas-turbine propulsion systems that produce less pollution and offer a smoother, quieter ride for passengers.

CABINS Eighty percent of the ships' cabins are outside units, of which about 580 have verandas. They range from the average-size inside room of 170 square feet all the way up to the massive Penthouse Suite, with more than 2,500 square feet, including a 1,098-square-foot veranda. Now that's a veranda! All cabins on both ships offer television, voice-mail telephones, safe, hair dryer, and minibar. Butlers are available to suite guests, providing full meal service, complimentary hors d'oeuvres daily, in-suite afternoon tea, shoeshine, and a variety of other pampering services. Suite guests also enjoy in-cabin whirlpools, walk-in closets, and VCRs. Signature Celebrity touches abound: comfy terry-cloth robes in every bathroom, for instance. Much marble and etched glass is used throughout and the stairwell and hallway art for which the line has become known is well represented in the guest rooms. Cabins are beautifully decorated in rich colors, with a lot of dark wood—reminiscent of the design of the great transatlantic liners, which the two ships openly seek to emulate.

Twenty-six staterooms, ranging in category from five basic inside units to six of the ships' Sky Suites are wheelchair accessible.

Millennium Cabins & Rates

Cabins	Brochure Rates*	Bathtub	Fridge	Hair Dryer	Sitting Area	TV
Inside	$1,700–$1,900	no	yes	yes	yes	yes
Outside	$2,100–$3,000	no	yes	yes	yes	yes
Suite	$3,500–$10,000	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

**Rates for 12-day Med cruise*

Constellation Cabins & Rates

Cabins	Brochure Rates*	Bathtub	Fridge	Hair Dryer	Sitting Area	TV
Inside	$1,830–$2,030	no	yes	yes	yes	yes
Outside	$2,200–$3,100	no	yes	yes	yes	yes
Suite	$3,500–$11,000	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

**Rates for 14-day Scandinavia/Russia cruise*

PUBLIC AREAS Both ships have a striking, three-story main showroom called the Celebrity Theater. The room has excellent sight lines and comfortable seating. When you tire of Broadway-style entertainment, you can retreat to cozy lounges and piano bars for a romantic nightcap (there's even a coffee bar for teetotalers). The ships also have late-night disco dancing. You'll find karaoke and first-run movies in the theater. All this, plus a spacious casino and the line's trademark Michael's Club, devoted to fine cigars and cognac. Other features include a music library, the largest spa facilities at sea, and a botanical conservatory up top.

POOL, SPA & FITNESS FACILITIES As on all of the later-model Celebrity ships, the AquaSpa facility on the *Constellation* and the *Millennium* is spectacular. The treatment menu is international, with options such as heated aromatic stones borrowed from Asia and a Tahitian jasmine flower bath. Next to each spa, there is a large and well-equipped cardio room and an aerobics floor. The top decks offer facilities for basketball, volleyball, quoits, and paddle tennis, and a jogging track (three laps equal 1km/.6 miles). Each ship also has a golf simulator, two pools (one with a waterfall), four whirlpools, and sunning spaces on upper decks.

ALTERNATIVE DINING The alternative restaurants on *Constellation* and *Millennium* are designed to equal those on other ships in their class—which is to say, they're very elegant and very good. Decorated in the rich, Edwardian style of the great liners, the rooms transport guests back to the golden days of ship travel. The nautically-themed reservations-only facilities—on the *Constellation* it's the Ocean Liners Restaurant, on the *Millennium,* the Olympic Restaurant—display artifacts from such great old transatlantic liners as the R.M.S. *Olympic,* the *Ile de France,* and the *United States.* Here, as in other dining areas on Celebrity ships, the menu is created by Michel Roux. The cover charge is a rather steep $25.

The cafe/grill topside offers buffet breakfasts and lunches and becomes a service restaurant by night. The Cova Café Milano is a good place to spend a half-hour with an espresso and perhaps a pastry.

2 Holland America Line

SHIPS IN EUROPE Noordam • Prinsendam • Rotterdam • Westerdam (preview)

300 Elliott Ave. W., Seattle, WA 98119. ✆ **800/426-0327** or 206/281-3535. Fax 800/628-4855. www.hollandamerica.com.

More than any other line today (except Cunard), Holland America Line (HAL) has managed to hang on to some of its seafaring history and tradition, offering an affordable, classic, ocean liner-like cruise experience. The line consistently delivers a worthy and solid product for a fair price, and is unique for offering midsize ships (there are no megas in this fleet) with an old-world elegance that remains appealingly low-key and not stuffy. These ships aren't boring, but they're sedate, so it's no surprise that the line attracts predominantly passengers in their 50s and 60s and up (the age range has widened a bit as the line has introduced new vessels).

The line's well-maintained ships are not big, by industry standards of the day (they range in capacity from the *Prinsendam's* 794 to the 1,848 of the new *Westerdam* and its fleet mates HAL's Vista Class of ships), creating a cozy atmosphere, with excellent layouts to ease passenger movement. HAL's ships tend to be relatively plain, with one-level dining rooms and pleasing, but simple, public rooms. The newer ships, such as the *Westerdam,* are more lavish, but still in an understated way.

Holland America emphasizes tradition, and that's what sets it apart. In the public areas you'll see antiques, trophies, and memorabilia, and the very names of the vessels hark back to ships in the line's past. For example, the line's flagship, the 62,000-ton *Rotterdam,* is the sixth HAL ship to bear that name.

Pros

- **History and tradition.** The impressive collection of artifacts and artwork on the ships reflect Holland America's important place in seafaring history and lend the ships more of a traditional ocean liner ambience than can be found on nearly any other line.
- **Great gyms.** For their size, the ships offer some of the most attractive, roomy, and well-stocked gyms and aerobics areas at sea.

Cons

- **Sleepy nightlife.** While there will likely always be a few stalwarts and a couple of busy-ish nights, if you're big on late-night dancing and barhopping, you may find yourself partying mostly with the entertainment staff.
- **Homogenous passenger profile.** Although this is changing to a certain degree, passengers tend to be a pretty similar group of 50+, low-key North American couples who aren't overly adventurous.

Compared with other American mainstream lines, here's how Holland America rates:

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Outstanding
Enjoyment Factor					✓
Dining				✓	
Activities				✓	
Children's Program		✓			
Entertainment			✓		
Service					✓
Overall Value					✓

THE FLEET

Holland America currently has 13 ships with the recent addition of the *Zuiderdam,* the *Prinsendam,* and the *Westerdam* to the fleet. In Europe in 2004, it is positioning its oldest vessel, the ***Noordam,*** at age 17, and three newer ones, the ***Rotterdam*** (1997), the ***Prinsendam*** (2002), and the ***Westerdam*** (2004). That *Prinsendam* date is somewhat misleading. Though it joined HAL just 2 years ago, the beautiful 794-passenger vessel was built in 1988 as the luxury, all-suite *Seabourn Sun.* Extensively refurbished before taking over its HAL duties, it is to all intents and purposes a new ship.

PASSENGER PROFILE

Before its acquisition by Carnival in 1989, HAL passengers tended overwhelmingly to be in their 60s and 70s, but Carnival's influence has moved the demographics toward a somewhat younger market, although any kind of transformation is far from complete (if indeed it ever will be). HAL's passenger rosters typically include some graying, 50-ish baby boomers, mixed in with many passengers of their parents' age.

Passengers tend to be hospitable and amiable, and sensible with their money. They tend to be fairly set in their ways and not especially adventurous. The line attracts many groups traveling together, from incentive groups to social clubs on a lark together. If you're a 40-something member of such a group and are worried about finding company aboard, don't abandon hope, particularly if you happen to be a divorcée, widow, or widower: You won't be alone.

DINING

Joining the trend, Holland America recently began offering a **casual dinner option** several times during every sailing in its buffet-style Lido restaurant, which also serves breakfast and lunch.

Of course, an elegant dinner in the main dining room is still the preferred venue. As its executive chef, HAL employs the renowned Reiner Greubel, formerly of Westin Hotels, New York's Plaza Hotel, and his own Reiner's Restaurant in Seattle. Instead of daring experimentation, Greubel recognizes that some of the world's finest cuisine comes from classics prepared with fresh and high-quality ingredients, and that some sophisticated palates still prefer traditional favorites: osso buco, cassoulet, Alaskan king crab, and Caribbean snapper, for instance. Dinner items might be as straightforward as roast prime rib of beef with baked Idaho potatoes and horseradish cream, or as esoteric as warm hazelnut-crusted brie with a compote of apples and onions. Children can enjoy tried-and-true staples like pizza, hot dogs, burgers with fries, chicken fingers, and tacos.

Value The Generous Line

Holland America is generous with its complimentary treats (a rarity in today's nickel-and-diming industry), serving hot canapés in some of the bars/lounges during cocktail hour, offering freshly popped popcorn in the movie theater, doling out espresso and cappuccino at no charge in the Java Cafes, and serving lemonade on deck on all warm-weather cruises. Unlike other lines, there's no cover charge in the small, alternative restaurant on the *Rotterdam.* Stewards replenish a bowl of fruit in your cabin daily, and each guest is given a Holland America canvas tote bag.

Greubel has also expanded the line's **light and healthy cuisine,** and he serves what he calls fun foods, such as spring rolls and **sushi.** And he did a major league improvement in the area of desserts, moving away from grandmother's favorite cakes to more sophisticated offerings, including many desserts based on tropical fruit and delicate sauces.

Buffets for breakfast and lunch, with the inevitable queues, are bountiful and frequent, and include separate stations for omelets, tacos, and pasta. **Indonesian dishes** are the theme of at least one buffet a week. There are also theme dinners in Europe reflecting European regions.

Dutch influences prevail with Gouda cheese offered at breakfast and, at least once during each cruise, a **Dutch Chocolate Extravaganza,** a Holland-themed midnight buffet where the calories stack up so fast you might as well give up trying to count them.

Room service is available 24 hours a day. Mid-morning bouillon and **afternoon teas** are well-attended events. Hot canapés are served in some of the bars/lounges during the cocktail hour.

On the *Prinsendam* there is also a reservations-only alternative restaurant, for a $20 per person cover charge.

ACTIVITIES

Activities are varied, relatively nontaxing, and fun. The Flagship Forum **lecture series,** featuring knowledgeable lecturers on such topics as culture, history, art, and architecture, is particularly popular in Europe, and offered on all cruises of 12 days or more. You can learn how to dance cheek-to-cheek, be taught the fine art of vegetable carving or creative napkin folding, or play bingo or bridge. A member of the staff will take interested passengers on **art tours,** discussing the ship's impressive art collection. Gentlemen hosts are on board to escort ladies on cruises of 14 days or longer.

HAL, like its competitors, has an incentive-based fitness program in which passengers are awarded points every time they take an aerobics class or do some other fitness activity. Points can be redeemed at the cruise's end for T-shirts, souvenirs, and so on.

For those whose activities include keeping up with the stock market or the office gossip, all HAL ships are now equipped with Internet facilities, at 75¢ a minute for an Internet hookup and $3.95 for each e-mail sent.

CHILDREN'S PROGRAM

Whenever demand warrants it (usually during the summer months), HAL offers supervised programs for children, called Club HAL. The menu of activities is not anywhere as extensive as on lines like Disney, Carnival, Celebrity, Royal Caribbean, and Princess, and HAL never pretends it is. When enough kids are on board, programs are designated for three different age brackets: 5- to 8-year-olds, 9- to 12-year-olds, and teens. However, based on the number of young people aboard, these barriers sometimes blur.

Regardless of the age of the attendees, young people are diverted with pizza and soda parties, as well as tours of the bridge, the galley, and other areas below deck. There might also be movies, ice-cream parties, arts and crafts, storytelling sessions, games, karaoke, golf lessons, disco parties, charades, bingo, and Ping-Pong. On the first night of each cruise, parents meet and mingle with staff responsible for the care, counseling, and feeding of their children. Activities are not scheduled while a ship is in port.

Holland America Fleet Itineraries

Ship	Home Ports & Season	Itinerary
Noordam	**10-day W. Med,** Lisbon (Portugal) (Apr–May); **10-day Northern Europe,** Dover (U.K.) (June); **10-day Baltic,** Copenhagen (Denmark) (June–Aug); **10-day W. Med,** Rome (Italy) (Sept)	**10-day W. Med:** Port calls may include Ceuta (Spanish Morocco), Minorca and Barcelona (Spain), Sete and Ajaccio (France), Monte Carlo (Monaco), and Livorno (Italy); **10-day Northern Europe:** Port calls may include Amsterdam (Netherlands), Hamburg (Germany), Esbjerg (Denmark), Bergen, Vik, Flam, Stavanger, and Oslo (Norway); **10-day Baltic:** Port calls may include Tallinn (Estonia), St. Petersburg (Russia), Helsinki (Finland), Stockholm and Visby (Sweden), and Warnemunde (Germany); **10-day W. Med:** Port calls may include Dubrovnik (Croatia), Corfu (Greece) Valletta (Malta), Palermo (Italy), Minorca (Spain), and St-Tropez (France)
Westerdam	**12-day Med,** Venice (Italy) (Apr–May, Sept–Oct); **12-day Norway,** Dover (U.K.) (June–July); **12-day Med,** Civitavecchia/Rome (Italy) (Aug–Oct)	**12-day Med:** Port calls may include Dubrovnik (Croatia), Santorini, Rhodes, Samos, and Athens (Greece), Kusadasi (Turkey), Livorno and Sardinia (Italy), Tarragona (Spain), and Valletta (Malta); **12-day Norway:** Port calls may include Bergen, Hellesylt, Tromso, Honningsvag, Trondheim, Vik, and Stavanger (Norway), and Skagen (Denmark); **12-day Med:** Port calls may include Valletta (Malta), Dubrovnik (Croatia), Messina, Naples, and Livorno (Italy), Monte Carlo (Monaco), and Ajaccio (France)
Prinsendam	**12-day Med,** Lisbon (Portugal) (May–June); **14-day Baltic,** Copenhagen (Denmark) (June–Aug); **14-day Europe,** Copenhagen (Denmark) (Sept)	**12-day Med:** Port calls may include Tarragona (Spain), Sete (France), Monte Carlo (Monaco), Naxos, Corfu, Santorini, Sami, Rhodes, and Katakolon (Greece), and Kusadasi (Turkey); **14-day Baltic:** Port calls may include Helsinki (Finland), St. Petersburg (Russia), Tallinn (Estonia), Riga (Latvia), Stockholm and Visby (Sweden), Gdansk (Poland), and Hamburg (Germany); **14-day Europe:** Port calls may include Hamburg (Germany), Amsterdam (Netherlands), Antwerp (Belgium), Dover (England), Guernsey (U.K.), Waterford (Ireland), Honfleur (France), and La Coruna (Spain)
Rotterdam	**16-day Europe,*** Copenhagen (Denmark) (July); **15-day Europe,**** Athens (Greece) (Aug)	**16-day Europe:** Port calls may include Oslo (Norway), Dover (U.K.), Le Havre (France), Vigo and Barcelona (Spain), Lisbon (Portugal), and Dubrovnik (Croatia); **15-day Europe:** Port calls may include Kusadasi (Turkey), Rhodes (Greece), Valletta (Malta), Civitavecchia/Rome (Italy), Barcelona and Vigo (Spain), Lisbon (Portugal), and Guernsey (U.K.)

**Also sold as a 10-day cruise*
***Also sold as a 9-day cruise*

There are dedicated playrooms on the *Rotterdam* and *Westerdam.* On the others, the room does double duty as a meeting or card room when there aren't many kids on board.

Babysitting is sometimes (but not always) available from volunteers among a ship's staff. If a staff member is available—and be warned, their availability is never guaranteed—the cost is usually around $10 per child per hour.

ENTERTAINMENT

Onboard entertainment has improved since HAL's acquisition by Carnival, which really understands how cabaret shows should be presented. Each ship features small-scale glittery Broadway-style shows with live music, singers, dancers, and laser lights. There are also musicians, comedians, illusionists, and the like performing in the various lounges.

Regular offerings on Europe sailings include a '50s and '60s dance party, a talent show by the crew (with Indonesian and Filipino songs and folk dancing), and first-run movies (complete with popcorn) in the movie theaters.

Pre-dinner cocktails and dancing are a major event of the day. And on cruises 14 days and longer, women traveling alone or those whose escorts have two left feet need not fear for lack of dance partners: A complement of "gentlemen hosts" sail on board and are available for a whirl or two around the dance floor.

SERVICE

Onboard service is permeated with nostalgia for the Netherlands' past and its genteel traditions. During lunch, a uniformed employee might hold open the door of a buffet, and a steward ringing a chime will formally announce the two dinner seatings.

Holland America is one of the few cruise lines that maintains a training school (a land-based facility in Indonesia dubbed in HAL circles SS *Jakarta,* also known as HAL U) for the selection and training of its staff. On the ships, the soft-spoken, mostly Indonesian staff members are quick to offer a warm smile and attentive service.

Although Holland America proudly touts its no-tipping-required policy, it's more lip service than anything else. In fact, like most other ships, tips are expected; it's just that on Holland America ships you won't be bombarded by guidelines and reminders—you can feel as though you're tipping because you truly enjoyed the service. HAL's no-tipping-required policy includes bar tabs, which, unlike on most lines, do not automatically include a 15% gratuity (if you want, you can tip a bar waiter in cash or handwrite a tip onto your tab).

Onboard services include laundry and dry cleaning. Each ship also has a self-service laundry.

Noordam

The Verdict

This cozy 1980s ship offers a comfortable, calm, glitz-free cruise experience and a slice of the past.



Noordam *(photo: HAL)*

Specifications

Size (in tons)	33,930	Officers	Dutch
Number of Cabins	607	Crew (Indonesian/Filipino)	530
Number of Outside Cabins	413	Passenger/Crew Ratio	2.2 to 1
Cabins with Verandas	0	Year Built	1984
Number of Passengers	1,214	Last Major Refurbishment	N/A

Frommer's Ratings (Scale of 1–5)

Cabin Comfort & Amenities	4	Decor	4
Ship Cleanliness & Maintenance	4	Pool, Fitness & Spa Facilities	3
Public Comfort/Space	3	Children's Facilities	2

The *Noordam* provides the amenities most passengers associate with a classic ocean liner. Inside and out there are nooks and crannies that create a cozy and intimate atmosphere—different from the wide-open, sprawling spaces on newer ships. This ship is pared down in scope and scale from its newer rivals, and consequently, cabins go at a commensurately pared-down price. It's a great ship for those looking for value.

The vessel was built at the Chantiers de l'Atlantique shipyard in St-Nazaire, France, and the basic design is classic, almost nostalgically evocative of the pre-megaship age of cruising.

Overall, passengers aboard this vessel tend to be more low-key than those aboard the line's larger ships, though they're certainly not opposed to a good time.

If you plan on traveling with children, it's wiser to opt for the larger, newer HAL ships, although the *Noordam* does have children's programs during holidays and on sailings that have a lot of kids on board. At these times, an all-purpose room is converted to a children's playroom.

Cabins & Rates

Cabins	Brochure Rates*	Bathtub	Fridge	Hair Dryer	Sitting Area	TV
Inside	$1,901–$2,438	no	no	no	no	yes
Outside	$2,470–$3,062	some	no	no	some	yes
Suite	$3,758	yes	yes	no	yes	yes

**Rates shown for 10-day W. Med cruise*

CABINS Standard outside cabins are a decent size (measuring 177 sq. ft.) while lower-end inside cabins are still comfortable at 152 square feet. All are furnished in HAL's low-key style. Mirrors make the space seem larger than it is, storage space is more than adequate, and bathrooms are compact and well designed. The highest category of cabin is the mini-suite, at about 294 square feet.

Most cabins on the Boat and Navigation Decks have views obstructed by lifeboats, and those on the Upper Promenade Deck overlook an unending stream of joggers, walkers, and passersby. Cabins near the stern are subject to more than their fair share of engine noise and vibration. Many cabins have bathtubs and all have TVs, music channels, and a fruit bowl. (There are no in-cabin safes, but valuables can be kept at the purser's desk.)

Four cabins in the B category, deluxe outside double rooms on the Boat Deck, are suitable for people with disabilities. Elevators are wheelchair accessible.

PUBLIC AREAS The decor is discreet and pleasant, with bouquets of fresh flowers liberally scattered through public areas. A 15-foot-wide teak covered promenade allows plenty of room for deck chairs, strollers, joggers, and voyeurs to mingle under the open sky. Some passengers consider it the ship's most endearing feature and it's a lovely reminiscence of the classic ocean liner.

There are some other unfortunate design flaws, however. For example, the show lounge is not large enough to seat all passengers. And, in general, the ship's choppy clusters of public areas and decks can leave you disoriented at times. The one-story main dining room, while pleasant, is rather plain when compared to the more glamorous ones on the line's newer ships (but it does boast floor-to-ceiling windows and fresh flowers on the tables).

The Crow's Nest is the best place to enjoy pre-dinner cocktails, and the Explorer's Lounge is a nice venue for after-dinner drinks and coffee (and afternoon tea as well).

ALTERNATIVE DINING None.

POOL, FITNESS & SPA FACILITIES There are two outside pools, a wading pool, and a hot tub. The classic aft tiered decks offer many areas for sunbathing or a snooze in a deck chair. You can walk or jog on the aforementioned Promenade Deck. Located on one of the topmost decks, the gym is small, but has windows and is equipped with rowing machines, weight machines, and stationary bikes. Also small, the spa is really just a couple of treatment rooms for massages and facials, plus a steam room, sauna, and beauty salon. Aerobics classes are held on deck or in a public room.

Prinsendam

The Verdict

The *Prinsendam* is a small ship, but feels spacious and has pleasing remnants of its luxurious past.



Prinsendam *(photo: HAL)*

Specifications

Size (in tons)	38,000	Officers	Dutch
Number of Cabins	398	Crew (Indonesian/Filipino)	443
Number of Outside Cabins	373	Passenger/Crew Ratio	2 to 1
Cabins with Verandas	151	Year Built	1988
Number of Passengers	794	Last Major Refurbishment	2002

Frommer's Ratings (Scale of 1–5)

Cabin Comfort & Amenities	4	Decor	4
Ship Cleanliness & Maintenance	4	Pool, Fitness & Spa Facilities	4
Public Comfort/Space	4	Children's Facilities	2

The *Prinsendam,* at 38,000 tons and carrying just 794 passengers, is cozy and appealing, especially for those looking for a traditional cruise experience. Built in 1988 (as the Royal Viking *Sun*), the vessel was briefly part of the fleet of luxury brand Seabourn (sailing as the Seabourn *Sun*), and underwent an extensive renovation in the spring of 2002 as it joined the HAL fleet. Additions included an alternative dining venue, balconies on a good number of cabins, and a cybercafe. Teak decks, quiet corners, and many public rooms furnished with antiques and Dutch art create a traditional ambience despite the modern amenities. The ship has been around the block but is none the worse for wear.

CABINS About 40% of the cabins have private verandas. Most cabins are good size (the smallest outside cabins are 181 sq. ft.; the largest suite is 725 sq. ft.) and tastefully decorated. All of the outside cabins have both a tub and a shower. Eight of the cabins are wheelchair accessible. Mirrors make the space seem larger than it is, storage space is more than adequate, and bathrooms are compact and well designed.

Cabins & Rates

Cabins	Brochure Rates*	Bathtub	Fridge	Hair Dryer	Sitting Area	TV
Inside	$4,015–$4,772	no	yes	yes	no	yes
Outside	$4,940–$6,820	yes	yes	yes	some	yes
Suite	$9,018–$30,720	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

**Rates shown for 14-day Med cruise*

PUBLIC AREAS The ship has eight decks and some 22 public rooms, including the sophisticated Explorer's Lounge and the more intimate Ocean Bar (in the center of the vessel, an excellent place for people-watching), as well as a coffee bar located near the casino. For the drive and bustle of shipboard life, music and dancing, and lively conversation, the Crow's Nest Bar, topside, is the place to be. The intimate Oak Room offers a haven for smokers, complete with faux fireplace.

Unlike those of many of its recent competitors, the *Prinsendam's* dining room, La Fontaine Room, is built on only one level. Occupying the entire rear portion of the Promenade Deck and much of the port side as well, it offers wonderful views. Casual meals are available in the newly redesigned Lido Deck restaurant, with indoor and outdoor (under an awning) seating.

As part of the renovation, the ship's theater was rebuilt to enhance acoustics. Although the *Prinsendam* has no dedicated children's facilities, it does offer Club HAL programs for kids and teens using public rooms.

ALTERNATIVE DINING The ship has a fine alternative dining facility, the Odyssey Restaurant, which offers elegant service and an excellent Pacific Northwest–influenced menu for a $20 cover charge.

POOL, FITNESS & SPA FACILITIES There are two outside pools: The bigger is designed for laps (an unusual offering), and the smaller has a swim-up bar. There's a wraparound promenade that walkers will enjoy. The Ocean Spa is elegantly decorated, with appropriately moody lighting, and has saunas in addition to massage rooms and a beauty salon. Passengers can get active in the small fitness center or on the tennis practice courts.

Rotterdam

The Verdict

A modern throwback to the glory days of transatlantic travel (without the stuffiness or class separation), this attractive flagship offers great features from classic art to rich mahogany woodwork and elegant, yet understated, public rooms.



Rotterdam *(photo: HAL)*

Specifications

Size (in tons)	62,000	Officers	Dutch
Number of Cabins	658	Crew (Indonesian/Filipino)	593
Number of Outside Cabins	519	Passenger/Crew Ratio	2.2 to 1
Cabins with Verandas	161	Year Built	1997
Number of Passengers	1,316	Last Major Refurbishment	N/A

Frommer's Ratings (Scale of 1–5)

Cabin Comfort & Amenities	4.5	Decor	5
Ship Cleanliness & Maintenance	4	Pool, Fitness & Spa Facilities	4
Public Comfort/Space	5	Children's Facilities	3

Cabins & Rates

Cabins	Brochure Rates*	Bathtub	Fridge	Hair Dryer	Sitting Area	TV
Inside	$2,673–$3,229	no	no	yes	yes	yes
Outside	$3,322–$3,774	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Suite	$4,712–$18,504	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

**Rates shown for 10-day Med cruise*

Rotterdam and near twin *Amsterdam* (which isn't sailing in Europe this year) combine classic elegance with contemporary amenities and provide a very comfortable cruise, especially on itineraries of 10 nights or longer. *Rotterdam* is the sixth ship to bear that name and is popular with passengers who previously sailed on *Rotterdam V,* which left the fleet in 1997.

CABINS Unlike the beige color schemes of some other HAL ships, the decor on *Rotterdam* is livelier, with corals, mangos, blues, and whites. The standard cabins are among the most spacious at sea and offer enough hanging and drawer space for 10-night-plus cruises. Bathrooms are generous as well, with bathtubs in all but the standard inside cabins. Each cabin has a generous sitting area, a desk, a safe, two lower beds convertible to a queen, and great reading lights above each. Veranda suites are 225 square feet and have 59-square-foot private verandas; deluxe veranda suites measure 374 square feet and have a 189-square-foot veranda and a dressing room. Both have sitting areas, whirlpool tubs, and minibars and are kept supplied with fresh fruit. The four penthouse suites are

huge—937 square feet—and have a 189-square-foot veranda. All suite guests can use the concierge lounge, where staff takes care of shore excursion bookings and any matters about which you'd normally have to stand in line at the front desk. The lounge is stocked with reading material and a continental breakfast is served there daily.

Twenty-one cabins are wheelchair accessible.

PUBLIC AREAS The ship has a great, easy-to-navigate layout throughout the public areas. Most of the inside public rooms are concentrated on two decks; ditto for the pools, sun bathing areas, spa, sports facilities, and the buffet restaurant, which are all on the Lido and Sports Decks.

Overall, the ship gives you a feeling of an elegant old hotel, with dark red and blue upholstery and leathers, damask fabrics, mahogany tones, and gold accents. The general theme is Continental and Asian, with a large reproduction Flemish clock greeting passengers as they enter the atrium lobby.

The two-level main dining room has floor-to-ceiling windows and an elegant, nostalgic feel, and is so well laid out that it never feels crowded. The Ocean Bar serves complimentary hors d'oeuvres before dinner each night and passengers pack in to listen and dance to a lively musical trio. More elegant is the Explorer's Lounge, which has a classical string ensemble. Nearby, the open-sided piano bar features a red lacquered baby grand. Unfortunately, the string group also can be heard from this lounge, as can the sound of jingling coins from the nearby casino's slot machines.

As on all Holland America ships, the Crow's Nest doubles as an observation lounge and disco. Here, the decor includes life-size terra cotta human and horse figures, copies of ancient statues discovered in Xian, China. The lounge has entrances on both sides and curves around a dance floor and bar.

The casino is more subtle than those on the older *Maasdam* and *Veendam,* though it's big enough to pass through without a problem and lively enough to entice gambling fans to risk a flutter. The main showroom, perhaps the brightest of the *Rotterdam's* public rooms, is done in red and gold and is more a nightclub than a theater. Sit on the banquettes for the best sightlines, as alternating rows of individual chairs sit lower and don't permit some passengers to see over the heads of the ones in front. The balcony also offers decent sightlines.

Other public rooms include a spacious library and large card room, a movie theater, and a computer room with eight flat-screen terminals for e-mailing or surfing the net.

ALTERNATIVE DINING Seating fewer than 100 people, Odyssey is a romantic, intimate Italian eatery; the charge is $20 per person. Because dishes are cooked to order, they always seem to be fresher and hotter than those in the main dining room.

POOL, SPA & FITNESS FACILITIES *Rotterdam* has a spacious, well-equipped gym with a very large separate aerobics area, floor-to-ceiling ocean views, plenty of elbowroom, and a fine spa. There's a pair of swimming pools, one set midships on the Lido Deck with a retractable glass roof and a pair of hot tubs. Less-trafficked and thus more relaxing, the pool in the stern overlooks the ship's wake. The great wraparound Promenade Deck is lined with wooden deck chairs—a quiet and nostalgic spot for a snooze or some reading. There's a combo volleyball and tennis court on the Lower Promenade in the sheltered bow. Golf putting contests are held in the atrium.

Preview: *Westerdam*

The *Westerdam* will debut in the Holland America fleet in Europe in 2004, immediately after completion of its construction in the Fincantieri shipyard in Italy. It is the latest in the line's Vista class of ships, the others being the *Zuiderdam* (2002) and the *Oosterdam* (2003). A fourth Vista liner, as yet unnamed, is scheduled for delivery in the early part of 2006.

The significant thing about these Vista ships is that they are HAL's biggest, at 85,000 tons and carrying 1,848 passengers—23,000 tons and 500 passengers more than any other ship in the fleet. The *Westerdam,* three football fields long, has 924 cabins, of which a whopping 623 have private verandas—more than two-thirds of all guest rooms.

The two-tier Vista Dining Room, a classy creation with glass walls on three sides, is one of 24 public rooms on board. One of these is a nightclub called Northern Lights—a noisy place for people who want to dance till the wee small hours. Another is the Greenhouse Spa (so called because of its floor-to-ceiling glass walls) which offers spa, facial, and relaxation therapies in 11 separate rooms. There are three pools (one with a sliding glass roof for use in inclement weather), a kid zone, and a golf simulator.

The Odyssey Restaurant and Lido Buffet offer an alternative to the Vista Dining Room at breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

The *Westerdam* will primarily offer 12-day cruises in Scandinavia/Baltic and the Greek Islands in summer 2004. Prices will start at $3,389–$4,100 inside, $4,129–$5,210 outside, and $8,583–$22,187 suites.

3 Norwegian Cruise Line

SHIPS IN EUROPE Norwegian Dream

7665 Corporate Center Dr., Miami, FL 33126. ✆ **800/327-7030** or 305/436-4000. Fax 305/436-4126. www.ncl.com.

Norwegian Cruise Line (NCL) offers affordable, down-to-earth cruises that attract seasoned travelers and first-timers alike. In Europe, the line's alternative dining and sports offerings set it apart. The company's performance has improved—in both service and in the quality of its ships—under the ownership of Star Cruises of Malaysia, which bought NCL in 2000.

NCL excels at activities—if it offered any more, passengers would be exhausted. Recreational and fitness programs are among the best in the industry, including programs where attendance at fitness events earns you points you can cash in for prizes. Also top-notch are the line's children's program and entertainment.

The company instituted a program it calls "Freestyle Cruising," which is highlighted by a relaxed attitude about dining (eat when and with whom you want, with more restaurants to choose from), tipping (automatically charged to your room account), and dress (the emphasis is on casual). As an added bonus at the end of the voyage, guests will be permitted to remain in their cabins until their time comes to disembark rather than huddling in lounges or squatting on luggage in stairwells until their lucky color comes up. New ships will be built according to this cruising concept—which has been standard operating procedure for the Star Cruises for years—while existing ships will adapt to the plan to whatever extent possible.

Pros

- **Flexible dining.** NCL's dining policy lets you sit where and with whom you want, dress more or less as you want, and dine when you want (within certain hours).
- **Sports.** NCL is a leader in this regard. You can play basketball on the upper deck or watch a football game on ESPN International (usually on tape delay in Europe).
- **Activities.** From cha-cha lessons to computer learning classes, there's a wider range and a greater number of activities on NCL ships than on most.

Compared with other American mainstream lines, here's how Norwegian Cruise Line rates:

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Outstanding
Enjoyment Factor				✓	
Dining			✓		
Activities					✓
Children's Program			✓		
Entertainment				✓	
Service			✓		
Overall Value			✓		

Cons

- **Unmemorable food.** Despite the improvements in choice, the line's cuisine is not its strong point. As long as you don't crave sophisticated fare, you'll be fine.
- **Inconsistent service.** Although better, service is not yet where it should be, even though crew has been added to handle the new and more labor-intensive "Freestyle" cruising concept.

THE FLEET

NCL is a cruise company in the midst of dramatic changes in more ways than one: After several years spent claiming (some would say defending) that its fleet of older, midsize ships offers a more personal experience, it has moved into the megaship age with the 80,000-ton flagship *Norwegian Sky,* sister ship *Norwegian Sun,* and brand new, ultra-modern, and bigger (at 91,000 tons) *Norwegian Star.* The ***Norwegian Dream,*** the line's only ship in Europe in 2002, is not quite of that caliber. But for a midsize ship that debuted in 1992, it offers a good number of megaship-type facilities and amenities.

PASSENGER PROFILE

In Europe, NCL attracts mostly an older crowd, with an average age of around 60. About 90% are from North America, and they tend to be more affluent than the line's crowd in the Caribbean and—as is true with American passengers on most European cruises—are more experienced: The majority have cruised before. The atmosphere aboard all NCL ships is informal and down-to-earth and well-suited to first-time cruisers, including families and honeymooners.

This is the cruise line for sports nuts who can't be without access to major sports events. But it's also a good choice for those looking for value who don't want to be on a big, brand-new megaship, but don't want to be on a budget ship either.

DINING

None of the NCL vessels is particularly distinguished for its cuisine, but the way they handle the business of dining is pretty darn innovative. When Star Cruises took over, it introduced into the NCL fleet a new flexibility concept called **Freestyle Cruising.** All restaurants offer open seating every evening, allowing you to dine at whatever time suits you best and with people whose company you crave that evening. As long as you don't stroll into the dining room before 5:30pm or after 10pm, the choice of table and partners is yours. You can linger over your meal until midnight, by the way.

> *Value* **Add-on Savings**
>
> Book your NCL Europe cruise at least 180 days in advance and get 2 pre- or post-cruise nights in a first-class hotel in Rome or London for free.

And, you can dress pretty much however you like, too, provided your garb doesn't offend fellow passengers, like the clod Jerry saw on a recent *Norwegian Sky* cruise who turned up the first night for dinner wearing—no lie—a backpack, shorts, flannel shirt, hiking boots, and a baseball cap, which he never removed. True, it was an Alaska cruise, so some of his clothing might have been

NCL Fleet Itineraries

Ship	Home Ports & Season	Itineraries
Norwegian Dream	**12-day W. Europe,** Civitavecchia/Rome (Italy) (Apr–May); **12-day Baltics,** Dover (U.K.) (May–Sept); **12-day Norway,** Dover (U.K.) (June)	**12-day W. Europe:** Port calls include Livorno and Genoa (Italy), Cannes, Le Havre, and Marseille (France), Barcelona and Cadiz (Spain), and Lisbon (Portugal); **12-day Baltics:** Port calls include Tallinn (Estonia), St. Petersburg (Russia), Helsinki (Finland), Stockholm (Sweden), Copenhagen (Denmark), and Oslo (Norway); **12-day Norway:** Port calls include Flam, Kristiansand, Honningsvag, Trondheim, Hellesylt, Geiranger, Bergen, and Stavanger (Norway)

appropriate on shore but *never* in the dining room of even the most casual of vessels. Jerry believes that somebody on the staff had a word with him about it because his dress became a little more appropriate thereafter. But he'd never be mistaken for a model from *GQ.* Resort casual is perfectly acceptable on all NCL ships. Only one restaurant is formal on the night of the captain's cocktail party.

The *Norwegian Dream* has six restaurants, including two main restaurants, an Italian alternative restaurant, a French alternative restaurant, a pizzeria, and a Sports Bar & Grill. There is a service charge of $10 to dine in the Sun Terrace Italian Trattoria or Le Bistro French Restaurant.

Meals in Europe include regional favorites such as Norwegian salmon, schnitzel, and the like. One night on each 7-day sailing, one of the main restaurants features a menu created by Chef Henry Haller, former White House executive chef. There is always a **light spa cuisine** option, as well as a **vegetarian entree** at lunch and dinner, and fresh fruit is often offered throughout the day. There are also **children's menus,** featuring the popular standards: burgers, hot dogs, spaghetti and meatballs, and ice cream sundaes.

NCL is also proud of its **midnight buffets,** which include, on the *Dream,* the always popular Chocoholic Extravaganza on each sailing. For sugar addicts, an ice-cream bar is open a few hours a day. In the afternoon you can enjoy **English high tea, a coffee bar** that serves specialty coffees as well as other beverages, and a pizzeria. **Room service** is offered 24 hours a day.

ACTIVITIES

Activities are one of the line's strongest points. You can take cha-cha lessons; play duplicate bridge, shuffleboard, or basketball; attend an art auction or spa or beauty demonstration; learn to tie scarves; or listen to a band at the pool. There are galley and bridge tours, trapshooting, makeovers, talent shows, wine tasting, and trivia contests. In Europe, the line also offers an enrichment program with **guest lecturers** including university professors who discuss such topics as religion, ancient history, earth sciences, and astronomy.

Spa treatments are run by Mandara spa, and include a variety of offerings with an Asian influence (Mandara was founded in Bali, Indonesia), such as a Balinese Coffee Scrub or Coconut Body Polish. Ironically, NCL switched spa operators late in 2000, from Steiner to Mandara, looking for an improved

product. And then Steiner bought Mandara! The new owners have allowed Mandara to continue with their own specialized treatments.

All the ships have Internet cafes, with access available at 75¢ a minute.

CHILDREN'S PROGRAM

Although the program and playroom are not as well-stocked as those on many other lines, NCL has expanded its Kids Crew program to offer year-round **supervised activities** for children ages 3 to 17. The program divides children into four age groups: junior sailors, ages 3 to 5; first mates, ages 6 to 8; navigators, ages 9 to 12; and teens, ages 13 to 17.

Activities may include sports competitions, dances, face painting, treasure hunts, magic shows, arts and crafts, and cooking classes. There's also a Circus at Sea, teaching kids circus acts, most of them humorous or magical (like card tricks) rather than the athletic variety. They share their new skills with parents in a performance towards the end of the cruise. Children get their own "Cruise News" detailing the day's events. The *Norwegian Dream* also has a video arcade and an ice-cream parlor, sure to be a hit with the young set.

Private, in-cabin babysitting by a member of the crew may be available from noon to 2am aboard all NCL's ships, generally for about $8 per hour for the first child and $2 per hour for each additional child. But check with the reception desk because availability of babysitting depends on staff numbers and needs, which even affects the price you may have to pay.

ENTERTAINMENT

NCL has found a nice balance between theme-related events and general entertainment that keeps everyone happy. In Europe, **local performers** come on board and in the past have included a Spanish flamenco group, a Portuguese folkloric troupe, and Irish dancers from the Cowhie-Ryan troupe, some of whose members have also been selected to perform in the hit show, *Riverdance.*

The casino on the *Dream* is small, but lively. There are several bars where you can slip away for a quiet rendezvous. Other small tucked-away corners present more intimate entertainment, like **pianists** and **cabaret acts** that include comedy, magic, juggling, vocalists, ventriloquists, concert and classical pianists, and other instrumentalists (including the occasional banjo player). Live big-band and ballroom-style music for dancing is popular before or after the big **production shows,** which are expensive, lavish, and artistically ambitious.

SERVICE

"Uneven" once described service aboard NCL vessels. That's not as true nowadays. Personalized service is increasingly important for the line since its change of management. Each ship has added about 100 crew members. Generally, room service and bar service fleetwide are speedy and efficient, and cabin attendants win passenger approval. But there are still occasional problems in the main dining rooms. The breakfast and lunch buffet restaurants often seem understaffed and hectic, especially if you're there at prime times. The Norwegian officers are generally smooth and charming. Tips of $10 per passenger, per day ($5 for kids 3–12; and no charge for children under 3) are automatically added to shipboard accounts (you can move that amount up or down as you see fit). Passengers in top Owner's Suites get butler service. Dry cleaning and laundry service are offered, but there is no self-service laundry.

Norwegian Dream

The Verdict

Despite its 1,748-passenger capacity, this ship doesn't feel like a megaship, though it offers most of the amenities and facilities of one.



Norwegian Dream *(photo: NCL)*

Specifications

Size in Tons	50,760	Officers	Norwegian
Number of Cabins	874	Crew	790 (Int'l)
Number of Outside Cabins	716	Passenger/Crew Ratio	2.4 to 1
Cabins with Verandas	48	Year Built	1992
Number of Passengers	1,748	Last Major Refurbishment	2002

Frommer's Ratings (Scale of 1–5)

Cabin Comfort & Amenities	4	Pool, Fitness & Spa Facilities	4
Ship Cleanliness & Maintenance	4	Children's Facilities	3
Public Comfort/Space	3	Decor	4

If your heart isn't dead set on a cruise aboard a brand-new megaship, you may find this modern midsize ship very appealing. (Yes, in 2004, 50,000-ton ships, which would once have been considered big, are now thought of as midsize!) The *Dream* is a quality, moderate-cost ship known for its innovative designs (by noted marine architect, Bjorn Storbatten, the Scandinavian designer who also created the much more upscale Seabourn twins).

In 1998, both the *Dream* and its sister, the *Wind,* sailed into the Lloyd Werft shipyard in Bremerhaven, Germany, where they were "stretched" by grafting a 130-foot midsection into each, an operation that raised the ships' tonnage and increased their capacity from the 1,200-passenger range to over 1,700. Other improvements made possible by the stretch included the addition of a casual restaurant, another gift shop, lounges, a library, a card room, a cigar bar, and improved spas, health clubs, and children's facilities (designed to gain NCL additional market share in the families-with-children niche).

The design makes the Dream appear more spacious than it really is. Both forward and aft, the ship's upper decks cascade down in evenly spaced tiers, resulting in panoramic views both ahead and behind the moving ship. Walls of glass line the length of the vessel, and 85% of the contemporary cabins are outside. However, in an attempt to save money, low-grade materials were used in the passageways and stairways (and in the cabins, too), so you know you're not on anything close to a luxury yacht (or even any Celebrity, Holland America, or Princess ship).

Cabins & Rates

Cabins	Brochure Rates*	Bathtub	Fridge	Hair Dryer	Sitting Area	TV
Inside	$2,029–$2,199	no	no	yes	no	yes
Outside	$2,349–$3,399	no	no	yes	some	yes
Suite	$4,499–$5,399	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

**Rates shown are for a 12-day W. Europe cruise.*

CABINS The big draw is that nearly all cabins are outside, and about 80% of them have picture windows. Standard outside cabins measure 160 square feet, which is okay but not large (Carnival's standard cabins, for instance, are 185 sq. ft.). The inside cabins are small, ranging in size from 130 to 150 square feet.

The accommodations have a breezy, pastel-based decor evocative of the West Indies. Unfortunately, bathrooms are tiny and storage space is minimal. Two people can just barely manage, but when a third or fourth person shares a cabin, it can get truly cramped.

Most cabins have a separate sitting and sleeping area. However, to accommodate this feature, the area around the beds was made smaller and now requires the grace of a dancer to negotiate without stubbing toes and banging knees. Most cabins have twin beds that can be converted to queen size, and cabins on the port side are for nonsmokers. Note that lifeboats block the views of the Category 4 cabins amidships on the Norway Deck, and early morning joggers might disturb late sleepers who have cabins on the Promenade Deck.

Suites are rather luxurious and decent-size, with floor-to-ceiling windows and mini-fridges; many have private balconies. The dozen-plus Owner's Suites are the most dramatic, followed by penthouse suites with private balconies. The 10 Superior Deluxe Penthouse Suites amidships on the Norway Deck have partially obstructed views because of the overhang from the restaurant above. Avoid them.

All cabins have TVs showing ESPN and CNN. Nearly a dozen cabins are wheelchair accessible, and an additional dozen or so are equipped with doorbell/phone/emergency alert lights and vibrating alarm clocks for those with hearing impairments, an innovation aboard cruise ships. Passengers in the Owner's Suites get the services of a butler.

PUBLIC AREAS The ship has a tiered design, making for roomier lower-level public areas, generous amounts of deck space on upper levels, and good passenger flow.

The ship has two main restaurants serving separate menus and offering open seating, as well as a pizzeria, and a Sports Bar & Grill that doubles as a buffet area. The Terraces is the most cozy and attractive of the dining rooms, rising three levels and evoking a supper club in a 1930s movie.

The casino is of the glitzy variety, but it's on the small side. There is a good variety of bars and lounges, including the Observatory Lounge for views and a Coffee Bar. Lucky's Bar and the Dazzles disco on the Star Deck see the most late-night action. The sports bar, with its giant big-screen TVs, is the most popular bar on the ship.

ALTERNATIVE DINING The *Norwegian Dream's* reservations-only Le Bistro restaurant is smaller (just 76 seats) and more intimate than the main dining room and a service charge of $10 is added for dining there. But it's worth it. The menu includes such dishes as filet mignon with foie gras, salmon in sorrel cream sauce, and Caesar salad prepared tableside. Try the chocolate fondue for dessert. There's also an Italian venue, Sun Terrace Italian Trattoria, serving dishes like buffalo mozzarella with tomatoes, shrimp scampi, and a trio of risotto, again with a $10 cover charge.

POOL, FITNESS & SPA FACILITIES The ship's Mandara-run spa is small but its offerings have been beefed up since Star Cruises took over.

The ship's Pool Deck is gorgeous, with dark wood and crisp blue-and-white striped canvas umbrellas making you feel like you're at some stylish beach resort on the French Riviera. There are two hot tubs and two pools, the more theatrical of which is on the International Deck. Here, semicircular rows of chaise lounges and deck chairs surround a small and almost purely decorative keyhole-shaped pool at the ship's stern. The view—whether of the ocean or of your fellow passengers—is panoramic. A larger pool lies two decks above on the Sun Deck. A great pool bar allows you to sip a drink while bobbing happily in the shallow pool.

The 24-hour fitness center is equipped with state-of-the-art exercise equipment. Aerobics and exercise classes are part of the activity-filled agenda. On the Sports Deck, there are also Ping-Pong tables and a golf-driving range, while upstairs on the Sky Deck are a jogging track and basketball/volleyball court.

4 Oceania Cruises

SHIPS IN EUROPE Regatta • Insignia (preview)

8120 NW 53rd St., Miami, FL 33166. ✆ **800/531-5658** or 305/514-2300. www.oceaniacruises.com.

Remember Renaissance Cruises? Founded in 1988, it made news in the '90s by building a fleet of new, medium-size ships and bucking the travel agent system by going direct to consumers. Revolutions sometimes founder, though, and that's exactly what happened to Renaissance, which abruptly went belly-up in the wake of September 11, 2001, its fleet put up for auction to the highest bidder. Princess scooped up a couple of them (which it now operates as *Pacific Princess* and *Tahitian Princess*), and now Oceania, a new cruise line founded by former Renaissance CEO Frank Del Rio and former Crystal president Joseph Watters, has started up with two others, the former *R1* and *R2.* Formed in January 2003, the line pulled off a near-miracle by putting together an organization and offering its first cruises only 6 months later, in July 2003.

The review that follows was written only 2 months after that, so some criticisms—including inadequate port services for passengers and a slightly chaotic feel in the buffet restaurant—may have been corrected after this book went to press.

Positioned as an "upper premium" line (which translates into English as something like Holland America or Celebrity, though on a much smaller and more intimate scale), Oceania is going for a kind of floating country club feel, with a low-key onboard ambience and few organized activities, a casual, sporty dress code (there are no formal nights), and itineraries that concentrate on smaller, less-touristed stops like St. Peter Port in the Guernsey Islands. Sometimes, the ships remain in port late or overnight to allow passengers a taste of the local restaurant scene and nightlife. Despite such luxe-travel touches, the line's prices are competitive with—and often even lower than—those of the other premium lines.

PROS

- **Excellent cuisine.** Dishes in the main dining rooms and specialty restaurants are truly superb.
- **Excellent, personal service.** The ships' European crews are extremely friendly and eager to please.
- **Intimate size.** Oceania's ships only carry 684 passengers apiece, making for a much more intimate feel than you get aboard a megaship.
- **Nonsmoking policy.** On these ships, smoking is permitted only in two small areas of the pool deck and nightclub. (Of course, this is a "con" for smokers.)

Compared with other American mainstream lines, here's how Oceania rates:

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Outstanding
Enjoyment Factor				✓	
Dining				✓	
Activities		✓			
Children's Program	N/A*				
Entertainment			✓		
Service				✓	
Overall Value				✓	

**Oceania offers no children's program.*

CONS

- **Few outside decks.** The only outside decks are the pool deck, a sun deck, and the unused promenade/boat decks, which at press time didn't even have deck chairs. Aside from the many private cabin balconies, there are no quiet little outside nooks.
- **Few activities.** By design, Oceania offers few onboard activities, leaving passengers to their own devices. Of course, this is only a "con" if you need constant stimulation.
- **So-so entertainment.** While music aboard is uniformly excellent, show-lounge entertainment could stand some improvement.

THE FLEET

Like all of the former Renaissance vessels, the former *R1* and *R2* are comfortable and spacious ships decorated mostly in warm, dark woods and rich fabrics. They're traditional and sedate, with an emphasis on intimate spaces rather than the kind of grand, splashy ones you'll find on most megaships. Of course, the ships' small size means there'd be no *room* for grand spaces, even if they'd wanted them: Each carries only 684 passengers, making them pipsqueaks in this era of 3,000-passenger giants. But then, their intimacy is one of the main reasons passengers choose them.

PASSENGER PROFILE

Partially due to the length of these cruises (mostly 14 days) and partially due to the low-key onboard atmosphere, Oceania tends to attract older passengers who prefer to entertain themselves, reading in the library and enjoying the destination-heavy itineraries. Most are Americans, with many from the West Coast and many "returning," having sailed previously with Renaissance. A sprinkling of younger couples usually find themselves on board as well, though children are rare enough to be surprising. Men mostly wear jacks for dinner, with or without ties, and women get a little dressed up (think country club attire), but otherwise all is casual.

Because of the line's stringent smoking rules, most passengers are nonsmokers. Aside from one corner of the pool deck and one corner of Horizons nightclub, smoking is not permitted anywhere on board—even in your cabin or its balcony.

DINING

Oceania's dining experience is one of its strongest suits, with menus created by renowned chef Jacques Pepin (one-time personal chef to Charles de Gaulle and more recently one of America's best-known chefs and food writers). Passengers can choose between dinner at four different restaurants: the main Grand Dining Room, the Mediterranean-style Toscana restaurant, the Polo Grill steakhouse, or the Tapas on the Terrace outdoor casual option. Seating is open at all of these venues, with meals usually served in a 3-hour window from 6:30 to 9:30pm.

The main dining room is an elegant single-level space surrounded on three sides by windows. It's spacious and understated, with not a hint of glitz in its simple wood wall panels, wall sconces, and teal carpeting. Tables seating between two and eight are available, though the smaller arrangements go fast. Just outside the maitre d's station is a cozy bar area where you can have a pre-dinner cocktail while waiting for your dinner companions.

Toscana and the Polo Grill are the ships' specialty, **reservations-only restaurants,** both lovely spaces that wrap partially around the stern on deck 10. Decorated to match their cuisine—with a bright, white Mediterranean feel and Roman urns and relief in Toscana, and a woody, old-Hollywood feel in

Polo—the restaurants serve 90 and 96 guests, respectively. Passengers can book their meals here during breakfast or lunch hours at the Terrace Cafe. To assure that all guests get to dine here, passengers are limited to two initial reservations.

On the casual side, the Terrace Cafe is a standard cruise ship **buffet** serving a range of sides, salads, and main courses. An attached pizzeria serves honest-to-god tasty thin-crust pies. At lunch, the pool deck's grill is also fired up, serving burgers, hot dogs, and specialty sandwiches. In the evening, the Terrace is transformed to allow for more romantic dining under the stars on the adjacent terrace, with drink service, Spanish cuisine, and candles flickering in lovely hurricane lamps.

Room service is available 24 hours a day.

ACTIVITIES

By design, activities are not a high priority for Oceania. Expect **enrichment lectures** themed around the region being visited, fitness and computer classes, informal health and beauty seminars by the spa and salon staff, and a handful of old cruise standards: bingo, shuffleboard, and the like. For people who are self-motivated and/or prefer to spend their time aboard reading in a deck chair or in one of the library's overstuffed leather models, this is ideal; however, if you like a lot of directed, organized activities, this is not the line for you.

The ships' full-service **spa,** run by Harding Brothers of Bristol, U.K., is a pleasant alternative to ship spas run by Steiner. Though prices are comparable ($99 for a 50-min. massage or an hour-long facial), the service is more low-key, without the usual hard-sell of expensive beauty products afterward.

E-mail and Internet access is available for 99¢ a minute at Deck 9's Oceania@Sea Internet center or at the two terminals in the library. Unlimited-use packages are also available.

CHILDREN'S PROGRAM

There are no special facilities on these ships, and the line typically carries very few children.

ENTERTAINMENT

The good news: You won't be assailed by steel-drum bands doing bad Bob Marley covers. Instead, you'll get a 12-piece jazz band on deck in the afternoon and in the club at night; pianists performing Cole Porter, Hoagy Carmichael, and other American standards at the martini bar before dinner; and an occasional string quartet. The bad news: That's the high point of the onboard entertainment.

Each night, the **main show lounge** presents a headliner, but at least in the line's first season the acts were hit-or-miss, with a Victor Borge–style classical pianist scoring big one night, a card-trick specialist going down in flames the second, and a folk-dance troupe from Bordeaux—on board while the ship overnighted in port—providing a pleasant but essentially amateur program the third. According to Oceania chairman Joseph Watters, the line has no plans to start offering typical cruise-line song-and-dance revues—and for that we can all be grateful—but the more personal kind of entertainment they're hoping to offer still needs some tuning up.

Other occasional entertainment options include movies presented out on deck, karaoke, and gambling in the ships' smallish, 19th-century-style casinos.

SERVICE

Staff in the restaurants are crack troops, delivering each course promptly but without any sense that they're hurrying passengers through their meals. Service

Oceania Fleet Itineraries

Ship	Home Ports & Season	Itineraries
Regatta	**10- to 12-day W. Med,** Lisbon (Portugal), Barcelona (Spain), Civitavecchia/Rome (Italy) (Mar, May, Aug, Sept, Oct); **14-day W. Med,** Venice, (Italy) Barcelona (Spain) (Apr, Oct); **12-day Europe,** Lisbon, (Portugal) Dover (U.K.) (May, July, Aug); **14-day Northern Europe,** Dover (U.K.), Stockholm (Sweden) (June–Aug)	**10- to 12-day W. Med:** Port calls may include Seville, Malaga, and Palma (Spain), Nice and Marseille (France), Monte Carlo (Monaco), and Portofino, Livorno, and Civitavecchia/Rome (Italy); **14-day W. Med:** Port calls may include Split and Dubrovnik (Croatia), Corfu (Greece), Valletta (Malta), Taormina, Sorrento, Portofino, Livorno, Amalfi, and Civitavecchia/Rome (Italy), Monte Carlo (Monaco), and Nice, Bonifacio, and Marseille (France); **12-day Europe:** Port calls include Oporto (Portugal), La Coruna and Bilbao (Spain), Saint-Malo and Le Havre (France), Dublin and Cork (Ireland), and Falmouth and St. Peter Port (U.K.); **14-day Northern Europe:** Port calls include Bruges (Belgium), Amsterdam (Netherlands), Rostock (Germany), Copenhagen (Denmark), Gdansk (Poland), Helsinki (Finland), St. Petersburg (Russia), and Tallinn (Estonia)
Insignia	**10-day W. Med,** Barcelona (Spain), Civitavecchia/Rome (Italy) (Apr); **10-day Greece and Italy,** Athens (Greece),(Apr); **14-day W. Med,** Barcelona (Spain), Venice (Italy) (May, Aug, Sept); **14-day Europe,** Lisbon (Portugal), Dover (U.K.) (May, July); **12-day British Isles,** Dover (U.K.), Copenhagen (Denmark) (June, July); **14-day Norway,** Dover (U.K.) (June); **14-day E. Med,** Venice (Italy), Istanbul (Turkey) (Aug–Oct)	**10-day W. Med:** Port calls may include Marseille (France), Monte Carlo (Monaco), Portofino, Livorno, Sardinia, Civitavecchia/Rome, Taormina, and Sorrento (Italy), Palma (Spain), and Valletta (Malta); **10-day Greece and Italy:** Port calls may include Mykonos, Santorini, Rhodes, and Aghios Nikolaos (Greece), Taormina, Sorrento, Amalfi, and Civitavecchia/Rome (Italy); **14-day W. Med:** Port calls may include Marseille and Bonifacio (France), Monte Carlo (Monaco), Portofino, Sorrento, Amalfi, Venice, Civitavecchia/Rome, and Livorno (Italy), Barcelona and Seville (Spain), Corfu (Greece), and Dubrovnik (Croatia); **14-day Europe:** Port calls include Oporto (Portugal), La Coruna and Bilbao (Spain), Saint-Malo and Honfleur (France), Dublin and Cork (Ireland), Plymouth and St. Peter Port (U.K.), Bruges (Belgium), and Amsterdam (Netherlands); **12-day British Isles:** Port calls may include Leith, Invergordon, Lerwick, Kirkwall, and Peterhead (Scotland), Flaam, Bergen, and Gudvangen (Norway), Dublin and Waterford (Ireland), Holyhead (Wales), and Isle of Man and Falmouth (U.K.); **14-day Norway:** Port calls include Bergen, Flaam, Gudvangen, Harstad, Hammerfest, Honningsvag, Alesund, Geiranger, and Oslo (Norway); **14-day E. Med:** Port calls include Urbino (Italy), Split and Dubrovnik (Croatia), Corfu, Piraeus/Athens, Santorini, Mykonos, and Rhodes (Greece), Kusadasi (Turkey), Naples, Civitavecchia/Rome, and Livorno (Italy), Monte Carlo (Monaco), and Marseille (France)

*Regatta *also does Canary Islands itineraries;* Insignia *also does Black Sea itineraries*

balances precision with friendliness, skewing close to the kind of understated professionalism you see on the real luxury lines. The relatively small number of passengers aboard also means service is more personal than you find aboard the

megaships. In the bars, staff tend to remember your drink order by the second day, and cabin stewardesses greet their passengers by name in the corridors.

Regatta • Insignia (Preview)

The Verdict

With their smallish size, understated decor, and serene atmosphere, these mostly nonsmoking ships are more like quiet boutique hotels than cruise vessels, and provide an ultra-comfortable, laid-back, yet stylish way to see Europe.



Regatta *(photo: Oceania Cruises)*

Specifications

Size (in tons)	30,200	Officers	European
Number of Cabins	349	Crew	373 (E. European/ Int'l)
Number of Outside Cabins	314	Passenger/Crew Ratio	2 to 1
Cabins with Verandas	233	Year Built	1998
Number of Passengers	684	Last Major Refurbishment	2002/2003

Frommer's Ratings (Scale of 1–5)

Cabin Comfort & Amenities	3.5	Pool, Fitness & Spa Facilities	4
Ship Cleanliness & Maintenance	4	Children's Facilities	N/A
Public Comfort/Space	4.5	Decor	4

Imagine a Ritz Carlton hotel in the shape of a cruise ship and you've pretty much got the idea here. Small yet spacious, intimate yet boasting exceptional service, with enough options and amenities to keep you from twiddling your thumbs but not so many that they overwhelm the destinations being visited. The atmosphere is relaxed and clubby, with no formal nights that demand tuxedos and gowns.

Cabins & Rates

Cabins	Brochure Rates	Bathtub	Fridge	Hair Dryer	Sitting Area	TV
Inside	$2,398–$3,198*	no	no	yes	yes	yes
Outside	$2,798–$5,198*	no	no	yes	yes	yes
Suite	$6,988–$12,998*	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

**For 10-day cruises*

CABINS Staterooms aboard *Regatta* and *Insignia* are straightforward, no-nonsense spaces with a hint of modern European city hotel: plain off-white walls, dark wood trim and furniture, and rich carpeting, plus 300-thread-count Egyptian cotton bedsheets, thick duvets, and wonderful down pillows. Spacious balconies have teak decking for a more classic nautical look, though the white plastic deck furniture is a little bit suburban patio. All cabins have televisions,

safes, vanities with mirrors, hair dryers, phones, full-length mirrors, and French-milled toiletries. Closet space is a little bit skimpy considering the lengthy (10- to 14-night) itineraries these ships sail, but drawer space scattered around the cabin, and space under the beds, makes up for this a bit. Overall cabin size is in the 165-square-foot range—not tiny, but not exceptionally large, either. There are also some bizarre little quirks. Cabin TVs, for instance (at least during Oceania's first few months) have CNN on channel 25, but you couldn't get to it by just clicking up through the channels—instead, you had to physically click "25." Light switches can also be mystifying: There doesn't seem to be any way to turn off the bedlights, until you discover the tiny, almost hidden buttons up near their shades.

Suites include minibars, bathtubs, and a small area with a cocktail table for intimate in-room dining. Ten owner's suites measure 786 to 982 square feet and are located at the ship's bow and stern. They feature wraparound balconies, queen-size beds, whirlpool bathtubs, minibars, living rooms, and guest bathrooms. Owners Suites, Vista Suites, and Penthouse Suites feature butler service. Thirty-two connecting cabins are available. There are three wheelchair-accessible cabins.

PUBLIC AREAS Overall, these are elegant yet homey ships. The look is "English inn at sea," with dark wood paneling, fluted columns, and gilt-framed classical paintings. In the bow, the spacious, woody Horizons lounge has floor-to-ceiling windows and brass telescopes on three sides; it's used for **dancing** in the evenings and for various activities during the day. The 345-seat show lounge offers cabaret and variety acts, musical recitals, magic shows, and comedy, and the smallish but comfortable **casino** features blackjack, poker tables, roulette, and slots. The attached Martini Bar has a long martini list (29 varieties, and 30 kinds of vodka to choose from!); a jazz band performs here in the evenings.

Other notable spaces include the comfortable library, decorated in a traditional English style with mahogany paneling and a marble fireplace.

DINING OPTIONS The Grand Dining Room, the main restaurant aboard each ship, features French-inspired Continental cuisine, with a string quartet providing music at dinner. The restaurant operates on an open-seating basis. As an alternative, passengers can make a reservation at the Toscana Italian restaurant or the Polo Grill, serving chops, seafood, and cuts of slow-aged beef. The Terrace Cafe serves casual buffet breakfast and lunch, and in the evening is transformed into Tapas on the Terrace, serving Spanish and international dishes.

POOL, FITNESS & SPA FACILITIES The attractive teak pool deck offers a pair of hot tubs and plenty of deck chairs for sunbathing. A small jogging track wraps around the pool one deck above, and the Deck 11 Sun Deck has shuffleboard, more lounging space, and a golf driving cage with a full set of clubs for both right- and left-handed passengers. The fully equipped **spa** on Deck 9 offers a variety of treatments. Just forward of the spa there's an outdoor hydrotherapy whirlpool overlooking the bow. A decent-size oceanview gym and beauty salon are attached.

5 Orient Lines

SHIPS IN EUROPE Marco Polo

1510 SE 17th St., Ste. 400, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33316. ✆ **800/333-7300** or 954/727-6660. Fax 954/527-6657. www.orientlines.com.

Orient Lines, like NCL owned and operated by Star Cruises, caters to an English-speaking clientele looking for a classically styled ship, serious destinations, better-than-average food, and a fair price. A good-valued cruisetour is Orient Lines' great strength, pairing a cruise on a midsize ship and land tour to make a more in-depth travel experience.

Orient's *Marco Polo* has an interesting history: It was built 35 years ago and sailed as the transatlantic liner *Aleksander Pushkin.* In the early 1990s, it was completely rebuilt from the ice-strengthened hull and engines up and is now a sturdy and graceful cruise liner, both modern and traditional. Although a young ship, it boasts the graceful profile of a classic liner. A cruise aboard this ship is social and fairly low-key, without the glitz typical of much larger ships or the pulsating round of activities. The ships perform destination-oriented cruises concentrating on the ports and well-run shore excursions.

Pros

- **Great cruisetour packages.** It is easy to plan a longer vacation by combining land extensions either side of the cruise.
- **Service-oriented staff.** The ship's Filipino crew aims to please.
- **The price is right.** Orient Lines has been a value-oriented company since its inception.

Cons

- **Limited handicapped access.** The ship does not offer the facilities available on newer vessels, with only a few cabins able to handle wheelchairs.
- **Some design quirks.** The *Marco Polo's* show lounge is awkwardly arranged, and viewing can be limited.

Compared with other American mainstream lines, here's how Orient rates:

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Outstanding
Enjoyment Factor					✓
Dining				✓	
Activities				✓	
Children's Program	N/A				
Entertainment			✓		
Service				✓	
Overall Value					✓

Orient Lines Fleet Itineraries

Ship	Home Ports & Season	Itineraries
Marco Polo	**7-day Scandinavia,** round-trip from Copenhagen (Denmark) (June, July); **7-day Baltic,** Copenhagen (Denmark), Stockholm (Sweden) (Aug); **12-day Baltic,** Stockholm (Sweden), Dover (U.K.) (Aug, Sept); **12-day Europe/Med,** Dover (U.K.), Barcelona (Spain) (May, Sept); **7-day Med,** Barcelona (Spain), Athens (Greece) (Oct); **7-day Adriatic,** Athens (Greece), Venice (Italy) (Oct); **7-dayAegean/Adriatic,** Venice, Rome (Italy) (Nov); **5-dayMed.** Rome (Italy), Barcelona (Spain) (Oct); **15-day Med.** Rome (Italy), Southampton (U.K.)(Nov)	**7-day Scandinavia:** Port calls include Flam, Gudvangen, Hellesylt, Geiranger, Bergen, and Oslo (Norway), and Aarhus (Denmark); **7-day Baltic:** Port calls include Tallinn (Estonia), St. Petersburg (Russia), and Helsinki (Finland); **12-day Baltic:** Port calls include Helsinki (Finland), St. Petersburg (Russia), Tallinn (Estonia), Riga (Latvia), Copenhagen (Denmark), Warnemunde (Germany), and Amsterdam (Netherlands); **12-day Europe/Med:** Port calls include Gibraltar (U.K.), Tangier and Casablanca (Morocco), Cadiz (Spain), Lisbon and Leixoes (Portugal), and La Rochelle, St-Malo and Le Havre (France); **7-day Aegean/Adriatic:** Port calls include Kusadasi and Istanbul (Turkey), Mykonos (Greece), and Dubrovnik (Croatia); **5-day Med:** Port calls include Livorno and Portofino (Italy), Cannes (France), and Palma de Mallorca (Spain); **15-day Med:** Port calls include Livorno (Italy), Cannes (France), Barcelona, Malaga, La Coruna, and Seville (Spain), Funchal, Lisbon, and Leixoes (Portugal)

THE FLEET

The ***Marco Polo,*** with its black hull, pronounced sheer and traditional lines, has a graceful ocean liner look and is one of the most handsome ships afloat today. Because she appears to reflect the past, many think she is an old vessel, but in fact everything but the ice-strengthened hull and engines dates from the early 1990s. In today's growing fleets of megaships with lengthy passenger lists, the 850-passenger Marco Polo provides one of a dwindling number of midsize ship experiences, one that is neither a high-priced all-suite vessel, nor a pulsating city at sea. While touted as an elegant liner with Art Deco flourishes, she is actually rather simple in decor and for some lacks a distinctive character. The outer decks are pure ocean liner style, and she is a delight to explore from stem to stern.

PASSENGER PROFILE

The shorter Mediterranean itineraries attract the youngest passenger list, and the Northern European and positioning cruises an older crowd. Still, Orient Lines' demographic is 50 and up, sometimes way up. Most passengers on these European cruises are experienced cruisers, and the line has also been successful in attracting British and Australian passengers along with the majority of Americans. Repeaters are a major chunk of Orient's business. This is not a big late night crowd; people exhaust themselves seeing the ports (which is why most choose this line in the first place).

DINING

Meals are at two sittings, and the festive atmosphere and low ceilings unfortunately make for a noisy room. On the bright side, dinner offers four main courses, with the Continental and American menu offering dishes along the lines of Surf & Turf (grilled tenderloin and baby rock lobster), chardonnay-poached

shrimp, tournedos of beef, honey-roasted Long Island duck, New Zealand lamb, and pan-fried snapper. **Vegetarian and health-oriented choices** are also available, preparation and presentation are uniformly good, and portions are sensible. The Filipino stewards provide friendly, helpful service. Wines are very reasonably priced, and the list encompasses regions from California to France and Chile.

Casual venues serve enticing and varied breakfast and luncheon **buffets** with indoor/outdoor seating. The outdoor grill on the *Marco Polo* turns out kebabs, hamburgers, and hot dogs. Well over half the passengers dress on formal nights. The Palm Court fills up quickly for a substantial **afternoon tea** service on days when the bulk of the passengers are not ashore.

ACTIVITIES

The European itineraries are destination-oriented so daytime activities are fewer than on the longer cruises elsewhere. Still, on Scandinavian itineraries there are **lecturers** on board from fields including politics, education, and journalism. Other visions include Ping-Pong, shuffleboard, bingo, and cooking demonstrations (the line prides itself on its cuisine). You can enjoy Asian-influenced **spa treatments** such as a Coconut Body Polish ($99) or sit in a whirlpool or by the pool. The card room tends to be a busy place, attracting lots of bridge players. E-mail and Internet access is available for 75¢ a minute from computer terminals set up on both ships.

CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS

There are no special facilities on these ships, and the line has historically carried very few children.

ENTERTAINMENT

Big-time shows and revues are not a feature of the line; instead, the show lounge stages more low-key performances like cabaret acts, classical concerts, the Filipino crew show, and some local entertainment brought aboard at some ports. The facility on the *Marco Polo* is one gently sloping level with poor sight lines. Further, it can get crowded because of the tightly packed banquettes and moveable seating and structural columns. There are also piano lounges and small casinos on the vessel. The late-night disco gets as many cruise staff as passengers. Gentlemen hosts are on board to dance with single ladies.

SERVICE

Overall, the ship has a loyal, hardworking staff, some of whom have been around since the line opened for business. Orient recently introduced **24-hour room service** from a limited menu. The *Marco Polo* has no coin-operated laundry but it offers laundry and dry-cleaning service.

Marco Polo

The Verdict

The *Marco Polo* is a comfortable ship that is well-suited to both longer itineraries and shorter, port-intensive cruises. It's an all-around winner.



Marco Polo *(photo: Orient Lines)*

Specifications

Size in tons	22,080	Officers	Scandinavian/ European
Number of Cabins	425	Crew	350 (Filipino)
Number of Outside Cabins	294	Passenger/Crew Ratio	2:43 to 1
Cabins with Verandas	none	Year Built	1993
Number of Passengers	850	Last Major Refurbishment	1997

Frommer's Ratings (Scale of 1–5)

Cabin Comfort & Amenities	3	Pool, Fitness & Spa Facilities	4
Ship Cleanliness & Maintenance	4	Children's Facilities	N/A
Public Comfort/Space	3	Decor	3

The *Marco Polo,* a former transatlantic liner, was completely rebuilt from the hull and engines up in the early '90s and is now a sturdy and graceful cruise liner, both modern and traditional.

Cabins & Rates

Cabins	Brochure Rates*	Bathtub	Fridge	Hair Dryer	Sitting Area	TV
Inside	$2,250–$2,825	no	no	yes	no	yes
Outside	$2,950–$4,095	some	no	yes	some	yes
Suite	$4,450–$5,250*	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

**For 7-day Baltics cruise, plus 2 hotel nights, some sightseeing, and transfers*

CABINS The 425 cabins (294 outside) are mostly average size, twin-bedded staterooms ranging between 115 and 158 square feet, with light wood trim, TVs, three-channel radios, phones, good storage, and hair dryers. Higher-category staterooms and junior and deluxe suites have tubs. The cabins are found on all passenger decks apart from Belvedere, the level for the public rooms.

PUBLIC AREAS The forward Ambassador Lounge spotlights after-dinner shows, large parties, and lectures, but seating is tight, and sight lines are poor. The Polo Lounge is a delightful setting with a pianist playing before meals and in the evening, and is a pleasant option for those not taking in the show. Tea is served in the Palm Court, and the tiny bar there is a snug hideaway. The casino offers blackjack, roulette, and slot machines. An adjacent area features a card room, good library with limited hours, and two boutiques. Aft of the buffet, an open and partly covered deck makes a favorite gathering place at the end of a day ashore. One deck up is a disco, and above that are the well-equipped health club and the beauty salon.

ALTERNATIVE DINING None.

POOL, FITNESS & SPA FACILITIES The cluster of three hot tubs looks over tiered decks aft. Below, several quiet areas are perfect for enjoying a snooze or a good book from the comfort of a deck chair. Handsome wooden deck chairs line wide teak promenades, and the Upper Deck has a wraparound walking

track. Because of narrow side sections, however, most walkers prefer to stroll the promenade below. There's an outdoor pool and a mirrored aft-facing fitness center and spa two decks above the Lido, offering aerobics and tai chi classes. Fitness equipment includes rowing machines, stationary bikes, treadmills, and weight machines, and a Steiner-managed Mandara spa provides beauty treatments, facials, hydrotherapy, and massages.

6 Princess Cruises

SHIPS IN EUROPE Grand Princess • Royal Princess • Star Princess

24305 Town Center Dr., Santa Clarita, CA 91355-4999. ✆ **800/421-0522** or 661/753-0000. Fax 611/753-1535. www.princesscruises.com.

These lovely ships—especially our favorite, the *Royal Princess*—offer a cruise experience that's both glamorous and fun. The *Royal* deserves a special mention all of its own.

Now owned by Carnival Corp., Princess achieved worldwide fame as the line portrayed in the TV series *The Love Boat.* It's a company that strives, successfully, to please a wide variety of passengers. It offers more choices in terms of accommodations, dining, and entertainment than nearly any other line.

The *Royal Princess,* the oldest of the ships—it's in its 20th year—was christened by Princess Diana, whose portrait hangs prominently on board. The ship was cutting-edge when it entered service in 1984. Today it is almost dwarfed by the behemoths in this and other fleets, but it remains a most appealing ship.

The other ships Princess has in Europe in 2004, the *Grand* and *Star Princesses,* are impressive for their size and variety of onboard offerings. They are so-called Grand-class ships—of which there are now three, all of them 109,000 tons. (The other is the *Golden Princess.*) These Grand Class ships manage to offer both massive, dramatic spaces out on deck (particularly in the stern) and remarkably cozy lounges, restaurants, and bars. All three, it should be noted, will soon no longer be the largest ships in service with Princess. The *Diamond* and *Sapphire Princesses,* both 113,000 tons, and the 116,000-ton *Caribbean Princess* are all scheduled to join the fleet in 2004.

Overall, the Princess ships are one notch above mainstream competitors like Royal Caribbean. But, while clearly a premium fleet, they are not luxury vessels. They offer a consistent product, and serve the upper-middle ground of the market in a very consistent manner. You get a well-functioning, semiformal product delivered on a large scale, and a good value for your vacation dollar.

Pros

- **Verandas.** The Princess ships have a lot of them.
- **Personal Choice Dining.** All the ships offer 24-hour casual dining, pizza, and 24-hour room service, and the *Grand Princess* also has three main dining rooms, two intimate alternative dining restaurants, and flexible dining times.
- **Efficient onboard tour desk.** Princess tour desk people generally seem to do a better job than most of getting people on and off the ship for shore excursions.

Compared with other American mainstream lines, here's how Princess rates:

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Outstanding
Enjoyment Factor					✓
Dining			✓		
Activities				✓	
Children's Program				✓	
Entertainment				✓	
Service				✓	
Overall Value				✓	

Cons

- **No free ice cream** (outside the dining room). It may sound petty, but it's irritating that Princess sells only Häagen-Dazs ice cream—at $1.90 a scoop and $3.75 for a sundae—in lieu of the free frozen yogurt and soft ice cream most all other lines offer from self-serve machines.

THE FLEET

Princess has a diverse fleet, which will reach 14 ships in the first half of this year. It has the three ships in Europe this year: the 45,000-ton ***Royal Princess*** and the 109,000-ton ***Grand*** and ***Star Princesses.*** Elsewhere, it has the 109,000-ton *Golden Princess,* two at 88,000 tons, two others at 77,000 tons, one at 70,000 tons and the two smallest, the *Tahitian Princess* and the *Pacific Princess,* luxurious vessels carrying only 680 passengers. In addition, the company has three ships still under construction at press time and scheduled to arrive in February, April, and May 2004.

PASSENGER PROFILE

In the past, most Princess passengers were middle-aged middle-class Americans, but the new megas, including the *Grand Princess,* are attracting younger, more active 30- and 40-something cruisers and honeymooners. (Jerry's son and daughter-in-law got engaged on the *Grand Princess* during a Caribbean cruise and returned to the ship to celebrate their third anniversary last year.) The *Grand* and *Star* have extensive kids' facilities, making them ideal for family travel, including multi-generational groups. Each vessel also attracts lovebirds with its wedding chapel, in which its captain conducts official marriage ceremonies at sea by pre-arrangement.

All of the ships strike a nice balance between formal and informal. They draw a relatively affluent but not overly wealthy crowd that appreciates the traditional cruise experience, as well as a dose of bells and whistles.

DINING

Of Princess' Europe fleet this year, the *Grand* and *Star Princesses* offer the most dining options, including three main dining rooms, two reservations-required alternative restaurants, a steakhouse, and an Italian restaurant, that have an $8 and $15 cover charge, respectively. There's also a Häagen-Dazs ice-cream parlor (selling its sweet treats for several dollars a pop).

The two larger ships in Europe have **24-hour casual dining** (in the Lido restaurant), pizzerias, and **24-hour room service** as well as outdoor grills, patisseries, and wine and caviar bars. Because it was built before the days of multiple dining choices, the *Royal Princess* has less extensive facilities, adhering more faithfully to the first- or second-seating formula in the main dining room.

Princess's food is on par with that of competitor Holland America, though not as good as that of Celebrity. The pastas are usually the best bet.

The dining rooms on the *Grand* and *Star* offer two seatings in addition to the **Personal Choice** option (with flexible dining times) and are open for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. The menus include a choice of four or five entrees, featuring halibut with saffron mayonnaise, broiled lobster tail, pheasant in pan juices, and beef Wellington, plus a pasta dish like ravioli con salsa di funghi porcini (pasta squares filled with meat in a creamy mushroom sauce). There also are always "healthy" choices and **vegetarian** options.

ACTIVITIES

The line that wants to be all things to all people is expert at programming activities to please a wide range of tastes. In Europe, the *Grand* and *Star Princesses* offer the most elaborate and extensive repertoire; the *Royal Princess* is much more limited by size and by the more sedate nature of its clientele.

Activities include your typical shuffleboard and bridge tournaments, lectures, games like Passenger Feud, art auctions, and exercise classes. There is also a year-old program known as **Scholar Ship at Sea,** a project under which Princess aims to make its passengers a little smarter by the time they leave the ship. The curriculum is constantly being tweaked, but, on any given cruise, it might include classes on how to get the best out of your home computer, culinary arts, photography, lectures on the history and development of the cruise industry, and even pottery for beginners. Some of the classes, because of the need to limit numbers, require an additional fee. If Princess has, say, 20 PCs on a ship, it can only accommodate 20 people for the series of classes. Class prices, however, are nominal.

If you participate in aerobics classes or other sports activities, you receive chits you can cash in for prizes, like water bottles and T-shirts, at the end of your cruise.

Princess devotes a lot of attention and space to its onboard libraries. And the ships all have movie theaters offering first-run movies.

Internet access on Princess ships costs 75¢ a minute, with a 15-minute minimum. The ships have laundromats.

CHILDREN'S PROGRAM

On the *Grand* and *Star,* **supervised activities** are offered for ages 2 to 17, and are divided into two groups: "Princess Pelicans," ages 2 to 12, and teens, ages 13 to 17. The two larger European ships have spacious children's playrooms and a sizable area of fenced-in outside deck dedicated for kids only, with a shallow pool and tricycles. Teen centers have computers, video games, and a sound system. They even have a teen's hot tub and private sunbathing deck. They offer the children's program year-round.

Major Merger

In November 2001, Royal Caribbean and P&O Princess Cruises, which owned Princess, announced plans for a monumental merger that would have created the world's largest cruise vacation company, with 41 ships and more on the way. The deal was expected to close in the second quarter of 2002. In Miami, however, Carnival Corp. had its own ideas. Rather than allow the line's arch rival, RCL, to become Numero Uno, Carnival chairman Micky Arison launched a pre-emptive strike, making a second, ultimately successful, bid for P&O/Princess. That, of course, made Carnival the undisputed heavyweight champ of the waves; it already owned Holland America, Cunard, Seabourn, Windstar, and Costa. The takeover also brought Carnival cruise interests in smaller companies in Europe. Look up 800-lb. gorilla in the dictionary; chances are there'll be a picture of the Carnival Corp. logo where the definition should be. Based on its past practices, by the way, there is no reason to believe that Carnival will consolidate Princess into any of its other brands; the company has always shown an inclination to leave a good thing well enough alone.

Princess Fleet Itineraries

Ship	Home Ports & Season	Itineraries
Grand Princess	**10-day Baltics,** Copenhagen (Denmark) (May–Aug)	**10-day Baltics:** Port calls may include Stockholm (Sweden), Helsinki (Finland), St. Petersburg (Russia), Tallinn (Estonia), Warnemunde/Berlin (Germany), Helsignor (Denmark), Gdansk (Poland), and Oslo (Norway)
Royal Princess	**12-day Northern Europe/ Iceland,** Southampton (U.K.) (June); **12-day Norway,** Southampton (U.K.) (July); **12-day British Isles,** Southampton (U.K.) (June, July); **12-day Europe,** Southampton (U.K.) (May)	**12-day Northern Europe/Iceland:** Port calls include Bergen, Hellesylt, Geiranger, and Trondheim (Norway), Akureyri and Rekyjavik (Iceland), and Belfast (Northern Ireland); **12-day Norway:** Port calls include Hellesylt, Geiranger, Trondheim, Honningsvag, Tromso, Flaam, Vik, and Bergen (Norway); **12-day British Isles:** Port calls include Falmouth (U.K.), Waterford and Dublin (Ireland), Holyhead (Wales), Edinburgh, Kirkwell, and Inverness (Scotland), and Le Havre (France); **12-day Europe:** Port calls include Bilbao (Spain), Bordeaux and Le Havre (France), Edinburgh (Scotland), Dublin and Cork (Ireland), Falmouth (U.K.), Rotterdam (Netherlands), and Brussels/Bruges (Belgium)
Star Princess	**12-day Greece,** Venice, Civitavecchia/Rome (Italy) (Apr, Sept); **12-day Med,** Venice (Italy), Barcelona (Spain) (May–Sept)	**12-day Greece:** Port calls may include Dubrovnik (Croatia), Corfu, Katakolon, Piraeus/Athens, Mykonos, Rhodes, and Santorini (Greece), Kusadasi (Turkey), and Naples (Italy); **12-day Med:** Port calls may include Corfu, Katakolon, Piraeus/Athens, Rhodes, and Santorini (Greece), Istanbul and Kusadasi (Turkey), Livorno, Naples, and Civitavecchia/Rome (Italy), Monte Carlo (Monaco), and Cannes (France)

The *Royal Princess,* on the other hand, does not have a dedicated children's playroom and only offers activities when there are 15 or more kids on board. On all vessels, kids' activities include karaoke, movies, tours of the galley and bridge, scavenger hunts, arts and crafts, coloring contests, and teenage versions of *The Dating Game.*

Princess does not offer private in-cabin babysitting at all, but does provide slumber party–style **group babysitting** in the playroom for $5 an hour (10pm–1am nightly, and 9am–5pm when in port).

ENTERTAINMENT

There's a lot going on, and the quality of the overall package ranks way up there. Choices range from glittering, well-conceived, and well-executed Vegas-style **production shows** (more ambitious on the two bigger ships because of their state-of-the-art show room than on the *Royal*), to New York cabaret singers on the main stage, from a wonderfully entertaining cabaret piano/vocalist in the Atrium Lounge (a throwaway space for many ships) to a rocking disco. This line offers a terrific blend of musical delights, and you'll always find a cozy spot

Fun Fact Cruise History

Princess Cruises started in 1962, when the company's founder, Stanley McDonald, chartered the long-gone *Princess Patricia* as a floating hotel for the Seattle World's Fair.

where some soft piano or jazz music is being performed. Hypnotists, puppeteers, and comedians are also part of the act. The Princess casinos are sprawling and exciting places, too, and are bound to keep gamblers happy for hours (or until the cash runs out).

SERVICE

Overall, service is efficient and lines miraculously aren't much of a problem (even on the bigger ships). Staff and crew are friendly, well intentioned, and generally good. (We've seen waiters deal with even the rudest of guests in an even manner.) Suites and minisuites on the *Grand* and *Star* come with **butler service.** And every cabin on all the ships gets **turndown service,** including chocolates, at night. The ships offer laundry and dry cleaning services, and have their own self-service laundromats.

Grand Princess • Star Princess

The Verdict

These ships are winners. Despite their size, you won't often feel as though you're surrounded by thousands of other people. There are plenty of opportunities to "get away from it all."



Star Princess *(photo: Princess Cruises)*

Specifications

Size (in tons)	109,000	Officers	Italian/British
Number of Cabins	1,301	Crew	1,200 (Int'l)
Number of Outside Cabins	992	Passenger/Crew Ratio	2.1 to 1
Cabins with Verandas	710	Year Built	2001/2002
Number of Passengers	2,600	Last Major Refurbishment	N/A

Frommer's Ratings (Scale of 1–5)

Cabin Comfort & Amenities	4	Pool, Fitness & Spa Facilities	4
Ship Cleanliness & Maintenance	4	Children's Facilities	4
Public Comfort/Space	5	Decor	5

These giant ships are among the world's biggest and most expensive (call it $450 million apiece). With 15 towering decks each, they are taller than the Statue of Liberty (from pedestal to torch) and too wide to fit through the Panama Canal. In fact, it's so big that the original Love Boat, the *Pacific Princess* (the one that's

now departed, not the one the company introduced into service recently) could easily fit inside either hull and still have lots of room to spare.

Inside and out, they are marvels of size and design. Their massive white, boxy bodies with their spoiler-like aft poking up into the air, cut a slightly bizarre, space-age profile. But the ships' well-laid-out interior design makes them easy to navigate. Amazingly, they never feel crowded—a characteristic, we've found, of the bigger, newer ships of Princess and many other lines—a tribute to the growing sophistication and creativity of the marine architecture community.

The *Grand* and *Star Princesses* offer an amazing variety of entertainment, dining options, and recreational activities. There's no question they're designed to be floating resorts. Each has six restaurants (plus a pizzeria and outdoor grill), four swimming pools, and three show lounges, as well as expansive deck space.

Even the ships' medical centers are grand, boasting high-tech "telemedicine" programs that, via a live video hook-up, link the ship's doctors to the emergency room at Cedars Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles.

Grand Princess Cabins & Rates

Cabins	Brochure Rates*	Bathtub	Fridge	Hair Dryer	Sitting Area	TV
Inside	$2,685–$3,065	no	yes	yes	no	yes
Outside	$3,140–$3,865	no	yes	yes	no	yes
Suite	$4,215–$8,215	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

** Rates for 10-day cruise*

Star Princess Cabins & Rates

Cabins	Brochure Rates*	Bathtub	Fridge	Hair Dryer	Sitting Area	TV
Inside	$3,460–$3,840	no	yes	yes	no	yes
Outside	$3,915–$4,615	no	yes	yes	no	yes
Suites	$4,990–$8,990	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

** Rates for 12-day cruise*

CABINS The two ships have 707 cabins apiece, about 60% of them with verandas. (***Be forewarned:*** The verandas are tiered, as they are on so many new ships these days, so passengers in levels above may be able to look down on you. While they might be said to be private, they're really rather exposed. Don't do anything out there you wouldn't want the neighbors to see!) Cabins are nicely decorated and all have safes, hair dryers, refrigerators, robes (for use during the cruise), and TVs broadcasting CNN, ESPN, Nickelodeon, BBC programming, and TNT (as well as *Love Boat* reruns). Storage is adequate and features more closet shelves than drawer space.

A standard outside cabin (including veranda) ranges from 215 to 255 square feet; minisuites run as big as 325 square feet; and full suites are anywhere from 515 to 800 square feet, including verandas.

The suites and minisuites (the entire Dolphin Deck on each contains nothing but minisuites) have tubs as well as showers (suite tubs have whirlpools), separate sitting areas with sofa beds, private balconies, and two TVs. (That may seem like overkill but the sets are so angled that it's possible for one passenger to watch one from the sitting area while his or her partner watches the other set from the bed!) In addition to the room stewards, all suites and minisuites come with the services of white-gloved butlers who wear beepers so they're at

passengers' beck and call to help with unpacking, deliver nightly canapés, make sure the minibar is stocked with beverages (it's stocked one time on a complimentary basis, including alcohol), arrange shore excursions, and make spa appointments.

The views from many cabins on the Emerald Deck are obstructed by lifeboats.

The ships have 28 wheelchair-accessible cabins. (The Skywalkers disco has a wheelchair lift up to the elevated dance floor, too.)

PUBLIC AREAS You'll wonder where everyone is. These ships are huge but have a not-so-huge-ship feeling. Thanks to its smart layout, with lots of small rooms rather than a few large rooms, passengers are dispersed rather than concentrated into one or two main areas; you'll have no problem finding a quiet retreat.

The public areas have a contemporary and upscale appeal, thanks to pleasing color schemes and the clever combinations of wood, marble, and brass. Two full-time florists create and care for impressive flower arrangements and a large variety of live plants.

There are three main dining rooms on each ship, with names that evoke thoughts of Italy—the Amalfi Room, the Portofino Room, and the Capri Room on the *Star,* and three named for old masters on the *Grand*—the Botticelli Room, the Michelangelo Room, and the Da Vinci Room, all decorated with the appropriate artwork (reproductions, of course). These restaurants are purposely not very large (the largest is actually smaller than the main dining room on the *Royal Princess*), so you don't feel you're dining with crowds and so the acoustics are good (although you may also feel like the ceiling is closing in on you a bit). In Europe, there are specialty theme nights including a Greek night featuring Greek music and national cuisine. Passengers are assigned to the dining room closest to their cabin. This means women don't have to trek a mile in high heels to get to dinner. There's also a 24-hour Horizons restaurant, and Princess's usual poolside pizza parlor (Prego), hamburger/hot dog joint (The Trident Grill, also near the pool), ice-cream sundae stand, and, oh yes, in case you're still hungry, 24-hour room service.

What it all adds up to, according to the company, is options, lots and lots of options—four dining options for breakfast, seven for lunch, and eight for dinner or evening snacks.

Gamblers will love the sprawling and dazzling 13,500-square-foot casinos on each, among the largest at sea. Near the casino, two lounge areas are ideal for whiling away a few moments while awaiting friends coming to join you to attack the gaming tables.

Moments Getting Married at Sea

Talk about the *Love Boat:* Aboard *Grand* and *Star Princesses,* the captain can actually marry you in a charming wedding chapel adorned with fresh flower arrangements (there are two full-time florists on board), ribbons strung along the aisle, and stained glass. There's seating for a few dozen friends and family members, and assistant pursers, decked out in their handsome dress blues, are available to escort a bride down the mini-aisle. Call for details on the ceremony packages.

The ships' most striking design feature is the disco, which juts out the back, and is suspended, scarily in our opinion, some 155 feet above the water. From this space you can literally look forward along the length of the ships, as if you were following in a helicopter. It's really quite spectacular. Smoke machines and other high-tech gizmos add to the effect at night. During the day its banquettes make a particularly cozy spot to snuggle up with a good book, away from the sun-worshiping gang, but with passing scenery in good view. Kids are hardly ignored on these vessels. There are two-tiered children's and teen's centers, the latter with its own disco. The kiddies have access to computers, games, a wading pool, and even a fleet of bright red tricycles. Teens get their own whirlpool on the *Grand Princess* (but not the *Star Princess*).

The ships' large virtual reality center, with interactive games and a motion-based simulator "ride," is designed to please kids and adults alike (all for an extra fee, of course).

The ships also have a library, small writing room, card room, and business center with computers, from which e-mails can be sent and received ($7.50 for 15 min. of use).

ALTERNATIVE DINING The alternative eating areas are Sterling Steakhouse and Sabatini's Trattoria. The steakhouse's $8 cover charge includes a menu focusing on beef (including rib-eye steaks, filet mignon, and a 20-oz. porterhouse). Sabatini's Trattoria serves fine Italian food in a setting that will remind you of Italy, for a cover charge of $15. Both require reservations.

POOL, FITNESS & SPA FACILITIES These ships each have something like 1.7 acres of open deck space, so it's not hard to find a quiet place to soak in the sun (in some of the more remote areas, it's said that you may find a few women discreetly going topless—although Jerry claims never to have seen that!). Each has four great swimming pools, including one with a retractable glass roof so it can double as a sort of solarium, another touted as a swim-against-the-current pool (although, truth be told, there really isn't enough room to do laps if others are in the pool), and a third, aft under the disco, that feels miles from the rest of the ship (and is usually the least crowded).

A large, almost separate area of the ships, on the forward Sun Deck, is reserved for pampering the body. Surrounding the lap pool and its tiered, amphitheater-style wooden benches is the large Plantation Spa, with a layout we personally find a bit weird (for instance, there are no showers in the dressing area). The complex includes a very large oceanview beauty parlor and an oceanview gym, which is surprisingly small and cramped for a ship of this size (although there is an unusually large aerobics floor). Unfortunately, the sports decks are just above the spa, and if you're getting a relaxing massage when someone is playing basketball, you'll hear it.

Other active diversions include a jogging track, basketball, paddle tennis, a fun nine-hole putting green, and computerized simulated golf.

Royal Princess

The Verdict

This ship, christened by Princess Diana in 1984, was ahead of its time, with all oceanview cabins and more cabins with verandas than any ship before. It's still a lovely vessel—one of Jerry's all-time personal favorites—offering a traditional cruise experience.



Royal Princess *(photo: Princess Cruises)*

Specifications

Size (in tons)	45,000	Officers	British
Number of Cabins	600	Crew	520 (Int'l)
Number of Outside Cabins	600	Passenger/Crew Ratio	2.3 to 1
Cabins with Verandas	152	Year Built	1984
Number of Passengers	1,200	Last Major Refurbishment	1999

Frommer's Ratings (Scale of 1–5)

Cabin Comfort & Amenities	4	Pool, Fitness & Spa Facilities	4
Ship Cleanliness & Maintenance	4	Children's Facilities	N/A
Public Comfort/Space	4	Decor	4

Princess Cruises set standards for the industry with its classy *Royal Princess.* The ship's 152 cabins with verandas was by far the highest number of veranda cabins on any ship at the time, and Princess has reflected the success of that concept with every vessel it's built since.

Even today, the *Royal Princess* is in some ways ahead of its time. But that may not be its greatest claim to fame; it's the fact that this ship was christened by Princess Diana. Somehow, it seems entirely fitting that a ship this elegant would be christened by a person of Princess Di's stature.

The interior design concept on this vessel aimed to create a simple yet elegant atmosphere. Carpets and wall coverings are in mostly neutral tones, and traditional nautical touches such as teak and brass enhance an otherwise contemporary ambience. The sea is never far from sight, since all public areas boast floor-to-ceiling windows (the vessel has some 16,000 sq. ft. of windows all told). The art collection (all original) reflects both British and American artists. For sheer elegance, this ship, with its traditional, sleek lines, has not been topped in its tonnage range. Crystal's ships might be said to have matched it, but nobody has improved on *Royal's* elegance or overall level of service.

Cabins & Rates

Cabins	Brochure Rates*	Bathtub	Fridge	Hair Dryer	Sitting Area	TV
Outside	$3,440–$4,840	yes	yes	yes	no	yes
Suites	$5990–$9,770	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

**Rates for 12-day cruises*

CABINS All cabins have large picture windows, and a quarter of them have private verandas. They are comfortably laid out, with a standard cabin 168

square feet, and minisuites of 336 square feet, including verandas. Twin beds can be combined to make a queen-size bed, and in standard cabins one bed can be folded into the wall during the day to create more room to walk around. The cabins all have bathtubs and showers. The two penthouse suites are very large (more than 800 sq. ft.) and each has a separate sitting/dining area with a sofa bed, table, and chairs, as well as a queen-size bed, large closets, and Jacuzzi tub.

Cabins on the Baja and Caribe decks, and some on the Dolphin Deck, have obstructed or partially obstructed views. Because the cabins on Promenade Deck are located directly above the public areas, you're best off avoiding them if you're a light sleeper.

In-cabin amenities in all cabins include safes, hair dryers, refrigerators, robes for use during the cruise, and color TVs broadcasting CNN, ESPN, Nickelodeon, BBC programming, and TNT.

Ten cabins are wheelchair accessible.

PUBLIC AREAS Most of the ship's public rooms are on the Riviera Deck, including the show lounge, nightclub, theater, and casino. All are good size, creating an overall feeling of spaciousness. The Princess Court is a circular lounge amidships that overlooks The Plaza, the ship's elegant and comfortable two-story lobby. The two-level restaurant has floor-to-ceiling windows. As mentioned earlier, keep in mind that *Royal Princess* does not have the same variety of alternative dining opportunities as some of its newer fleetmates.

The Horizon Lounge on the top deck offers a panoramic view of the passing scenery. The space is used as an observation lounge during the day and a disco at night.

The ship has lots of teak deck space, including a Promenade Deck you can walk all the way around.

ALTERNATIVE DINING None.

POOL, FITNESS & SPA FACILITIES The ship has three pool areas, including one of the largest lap pools at sea. The pool on the Lido Deck is actually a combination of several pools grouped together in a circular pattern.

The ship's small spa and oceanview gym (with Lifecycles, an 11-station multigym, and two massage rooms) are on the top deck, where there are also two saunas, an indoor hot tub, and a beauty salon, as well as table tennis and shuffleboard. You can jog on the Promenade Deck.

7 Royal Caribbean International

SHIPS IN EUROPE Brilliance of the Seas • Splendour of the Seas • Jewel of the Seas (preview)

1050 Caribbean Way, Miami, FL 33132. ✆ **800/327-6700** or 305/539-6000. Fax 800/722-5329. www.royalcaribbean.com.

Together, Royal Caribbean International and its affiliate, Celebrity Cruises, are one of the biggest and most successful cruise operations in the world. But it clearly now takes second place to the vast holdings of its arch rival, Carnival Corp., which recently took over P&O Princess. Royal Caribbean sells a big-ship cruise experience that's reasonably priced and designed to please everyone, except, perhaps, those who hate crowds. The ships are mostly huge, well run, and provide a consistent product, overseen by an army of service employees who pay close attention to detail. Bringing to Europe the mass-market American experience that's proven so popular in the Caribbean, these ships are contemporary, attractive, and glamorous without being overly glitzy.

The company's vessels in Europe are megaships with multistory atria, mall-like shopping complexes, multilevel dining rooms and show lounges, wide-open public areas, indoor (with retractable roof) and outdoor pools, and relatively small cabins (although those on the brand-new *Jewel* are a little bigger than on the other vessels).

Pros

- **Entertainment.** The line's offerings are among the best at sea, and include both flashy show productions and headliner acts.
- **Attractive public rooms.** They are witty and classy, with lots of greenery and artwork, and just the right amount of glamour. And there's lots of glass, most notably the line's trademark Viking Crown Lounges, for viewing the scenery outside.

Cons

- **Cabin categories.** These ships have 16 to 19 different cabin categories, which can be very confusing, and cabins aren't very big (but they do all offer sitting areas).
- **Crowds.** Hey, these are big ships, so there are going to be lines at times, especially in the buffet restaurants, at bars, and getting on and off the ship in port.

Compared with other American mainstream lines, here's how Royal Caribbean rates:

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Outstanding
Enjoyment Factor					✓
Dining			✓		
Activities				✓	
Children's Program				✓	
Entertainment					✓
Service			✓		
Overall Value				✓	

Size Matters

Back in 1988, Royal Caribbean was the first line to introduce megaships. The 73,192-ton *Sovereign of the Seas* was the largest passenger ship built in the previous 50 years, and introduced features that have become industry standards, including the multistory atrium. In late 1999, Royal Caribbean grabbed headlines again by introducing the largest ship in the world, the 142,000-ton *Voyager of the Seas.* For the first time on cruise ships, this class offers innovations like interior cabins with views of the atrium (think Hyatt hotels). Cunard decided to build an even bigger ship, the 150,000-ton *Queen Mary 2* (see Cunard in Chapter 7). So in the world of "mine's bigger" it should come as no surprise that Royal Caribbean announced in 2003 it has signed a deal to add an even larger, Ultra Voyager model—160,000 tons and 3,600 passengers—to be introduced in May 2006. The three ships in Europe this year are all considerably smaller than the *Voyager;* the *Brilliance* and the *Jewel* weigh 90,000 tons and the *Splendour* just 69,130 tons.

THE FLEET

Royal Caribbean will have 18 ships in its fleet by the end of 2004, including three of the world's largest, the 3,000-plus-passenger *Voyager of the Seas* and its equally mammoth sisters *Explorer of the Seas* and *Adventure of the Seas.* The ***Splendour of the Seas*** isn't quite as large, but it's still a giant ship in the scheme of things. The ***Brilliance of the Seas*** and brand new ***Jewel of the Seas*** belong to the brand new generation of 2,100-passenger vessels the company introduced with the *Radiance of the Seas* in 2001.

More vessels are under construction or on order.

PASSENGER PROFILE

Most passengers in Europe are couples in their 40s to 60s, but there are also honeymoon couples, younger singles, and families (including three generations—children, parents, and grandparents—traveling together). About half of the guests have cruised before; more than half will be on their first trip to Europe. The majority of passengers come from somewhere in North America, although these ships also attract Europeans. Whenever there are more than 200 non-English speakers of a particular language on board, announcements are made in that language (usually Spanish, French, German, or Russian).

DINING

Royal Caribbean has changed and upgraded its dining options, but the cuisine is still rather pedestrian. Entrees may include prime rib, grilled medallions of veal, deviled crab, and Chinese roast duck, as well as a pasta option, such as ravioli. There's always a **ShipShape healthy menu option** (along the lines of pan-seared salmon) as well as a **vegetarian option** such as Indian spiced curry. Cuisine is often presented in different themes, with table settings, menus, and waiters' costumes reflecting the theme, including Latin Night.

The **formal dining room** on each ship offers two seatings, and an alternative casual evening dining option is offered in the poolside Windjammer Café most nights of the cruise. The *Jewel* and the *Brilliance* also have alternative dining options including Chops Grille steakhouse, and Portofino, an upscale Italian restaurant (for a fee of $20, and with reservations required; kids are not allowed).

Royal Caribbean Fleet Itineraries

Ship	Home Ports & Season	Itineraries
Brilliance of the Seas	**12-day Med,** Barcelona (Spain) (May–Oct)	**12-day Med:** Port calls may include Cannes (France), Livorno/Florence, Naples, Civitavecchia/Rome, and Venice (Italy), Dubrovnik (Croatia), Corfu, Mykonos, Santorini, and Athens/Piraeus (Greece), Ephesus (Turkey), and Valletta (Malta)
Jewel of the Seas	**12-day Baltic,** Harwich (England) (May–Aug); **12-day British Isles/ Norway,** Harwich (England) (June–July)	**12-day Baltic:** Port calls may include Oslo (Norway), Copenhagen (Denmark), Stockholm (Sweden), Helsinki (Finland), St. Petersburg (Russia), and Tallinn (Estonia); **12-day British Isles/Norway:** Port calls may include Paris/Le Havre (France), Plymouth (England), Cork and Dublin (Ireland), Glasgow (Scotland), Bergen, Flaam, Geiranger, and Hellesylt (Norway), and Amsterdam (The Netherlands)
Splendour of the Seas	**7-day W. Med,** Barcelona (Spain) (May–Oct)	**7-day W. Med:** Port calls may include Monte Carlo (Monaco), Livorno/Florence, Civitavecchia/Rome, and Naples (Italy), and Valletta (Malta)

You can eat breakfast and lunch in the main dining room or in the buffet-style Windjammer Café, and both also have the option of a cafe with a light menu. Lines, unfortunately, can grow long. **Ice cream** and a couple of toppings are available throughout the day from a station in the Windjammer. There's also a **midnight buffet** nightly, and sandwiches are served throughout the night in the public lounges. Pizza is served in the afternoon and late night for those after-partying munchies. The *Splendour* does not have reservations-only, additional-fee dining facilities, but, like the other two, it has a pizza parlor at strategic hours of the day, a late-night buffet in the Windjammer Café on Deck 10, and, of course, **24-hour room service.** An extensive **kids' menu** on all three ships features items like fish sticks, burritos, oven-fried lemon chicken, spaghetti and meatballs, and pizza; the standard burgers, hot dogs, and fries; plus lots of yummy desserts.

ACTIVITIES

Daytime activities are typical cruise line fare: bingo, shuffleboard, horse racing, line-dancing lessons, crafts lessons, spa and beauty demonstrations, contests and games, and art auctions. Destination-type lectures focus on the itinerary. The *Splendour of the Seas* and *Brilliance of the Seas* even feature **miniature golf courses,** right on board!

If you participate in the line's **ShipShape fitness program,** which includes aerobics and other classes, you'll get chits you can turn in at the end of the cruise for prizes like T-shirts and baseball caps.

If **shopping** can be considered an activity, Royal Caribbean offers a particularly impressive selection of shops clustered around the atrium. You can surf the Web and check your e-mail at the Internet cafe for 50¢ a minute.

CHILDREN'S PROGRAM

Year-round, Royal Caribbean offers **supervised kids' programs** fleetwide for children ages 3 to 17. Male and female youth staff all have college degrees in education, recreation, or a related field. The "Adventure Ocean" program offers fun and games for four age groups: Aquanauts, ages 3 to 5; Explorers, ages 6 to 8; Voyagers, ages 9 to 12; and Navigators, ages 13 to 17.

Each ship has a **children's playroom,** a **teen center and disco,** and a **video arcade.** The fun includes talent shows, karaoke, pizza and ice-cream parties, bingo, scavenger hunts, and game shows.

Slumber party–style **group babysitting** is available nightly and also when the ship is in port. The charge is $4 per child. **Private, in-cabin babysitting** by a crew member is available and must be booked at least 24 hours in advance through the purser's desk. The charge is $8 per hour for up to two children in the same family, and $10 per hour for a maximum of three kids in the same family. Book early, of course; availability of a babysitter is dictated by the number of children on board.

ENTERTAINMENT

The line doesn't scrimp on entertainment. There is something happening on these ships from before dinner until late at night, including lavish Las Vegas–style show productions done on sprawling high-tech stages, music acts, comedians, and sometimes even big-name performers.

Royal Caribbean uses 8- to 10-piece bands for its main showroom, and its large-cast **revues** are among the best you'll find on a ship. Show bands and other lounge acts, who keep the music playing all over the ship, are all first-rate.

SERVICE

Overall, service in the restaurants and cabins is friendly, accommodating, and efficient, despite some language-barrier problems (sign language often comes in handy). You're likely to be greeted with a smile by someone polishing the brass in a stairwell, a greeting that supervisors encourage on the part of even the lowest-ranking employees. That said, big, bustling ships like Royal Caribbean's are no strangers to crowds, lines, and harried servers not able to get to you exactly when you'd like them to. While laundry and dry cleaning services are available, the ships do not have self-service laundries, which can be an annoyance on a longer cruise.

Splendour of the Seas

The Verdict

This contemporary cruise ship is truly a floating resort (think Hyatt on the high seas) and offers just the right amount of glamour and excitement, without going overboard—so to speak.



Splendour of the Seas *(photo: Royal Caribbean International)*

Specifications

Size (in tons)	69,130	Officers	Norwegian/Int'l
Number of Cabins	902	Crew (Int'l)	723
Number of Outside Cabins	575	Passenger/Crew Ratio	2.5 to 1
Cabins with Verandas	231	Year Built	2003
Number of Passengers	2,076		

Frommer's Ratings (Scale of 1–5)

Cabin Comfort & Amenities	4	Pool, Fitness & Spa Facilities	5
Ship Cleanliness & Maintenance	4	Children's Facilities	4
Public Comfort/Space	5	Decor	5

This was one of the first in the Vision class, marking the beginning of a highly successful series of ships. The contemporary vessel is quite spectacular, from its chrome, glass, and marble multistory atria to its dazzling casino and high tech theater, and will no doubt elicit a fair number of "Ahs." Glass and light are everywhere (there are about 2 acres of glass canopies, glass windbreaks, skylights, and floor-to-ceiling windows with sweeping views). The decor is enhanced by impressive art collections and lots of greenery.

Cabins & Rates

Cabins	Brochure Rates	Bathtub	Fridge	Hair Dryer	Sitting Area	TV
Inside	$1,699–$1,929	yes	no	yes	no	yes
Outside	$1,999–$2,699	no	some	yes	yes	yes
Suite	$3,199–$7,989	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

CABINS To be polite, cabins are compact. Inside cabins measure 138 square feet and outside cabins 153 square feet. For big, check out the Royal Suite—it measures a mammoth 1,150 square feet. Nearly one-fourth of the cabins aboard each ship have private verandas and about a third can accommodate third and fourth passengers. All have beds convertible to queen-size, phone, interactive TV (with some 20 channels), safe, radio, and individually controlled air-conditioning. Bathrooms, while not the largest, have good storage space, including a multilevel built-in shelf in the shower stalls. Seventeen cabins are accessible for travelers with disabilities.

PUBLIC AREAS Warm woods and brass, luxuriant fountains and foliage, glass and crystal, buttery leathers, and carefully chosen artwork and textures highlight the well laid-out public areas. A soaring seven-story "Centrum" atrium crowned by a sloped two-deck-high skylight is the focal point of the ship. Glass elevators, a la Hyatt, take passengers up through the Centrum into the stunning Viking Crown Lounge, a glass-sided spaceship-like area high above the waves.

There is an array of other hideaway refuges, including cocktail bars, a well-stocked library, and card rooms. The Schooner Bar is a casual piano bar, and is a great place for a pre-dinner drink or late-night unwinding. Ditto the Champagne Terrace at the foot of the atrium. The large dining room spans two decks and is interconnected with a very grand staircase. A pianist plays a massive grand piano throughout the dinner service.

The ship has a two-story theater and there's not a bad seat in the house. The casino is Vegas-style flashy and offers hundreds of gambling stations. The vessel's

conference rooms can hold up to 200 people. Regrettably, there are no self-service laundromats.

ALTERNATIVE DINING None.

POOL, FITNESS & SPA FACILITIES The ShipShape spa is a wonderful, soothing respite from the hubbub of ship life. It offers a wide selection of treatments, as well as the standard steam rooms and saunas. Adjacent to the spa, a spacious solarium features a pool (with a retractable roof), lounge chairs, and floor-to-ceiling windows. This spot is a peaceful place to repose before or after a spa treatment, except in the afternoon when pizza is being served (for some reason pizza draws loud people). The gym is not particularly large, but is well equipped.

Overall, there's more than enough open deck area, plus a jogging track, shuffleboard, Ping-Pong, and a 6,000-square-foot, 18-hole miniature golf course complete with trees, sand traps, and water hazards. The main pool area has two whirlpools, and there are two more in the Solarium.

Brilliance of the Seas • Jewel of the Seas (Preview)

The Verdict

These contemporary vessels produce all of the top-notch facilities and activities that cruisers crave without the gaudy trappings of some of its rivals.



Brilliance of the Seas *(photo: Royal Caribbean International)*

Specifications

Size (in tons)	90,000	Officers	Norwegian/Int'l
Number of Cabins	1,249	Crew (Int'l)	859
Number of Outside Cabins	1,043	Passenger/Crew Ratio	2.5 to 1
Cabins with Verandas	560	Year Built	2002/2004
Number of Passengers	2,501		

Frommer's Ratings (Scale of 1–5)

Cabin Comfort & Amenities	4	Pool, Fitness & Spa Facilities	5
Ship Cleanliness & Maintenance	4	Children's Facilities	4
Public Comfort/Space	5	Decor	5

The *Brilliance of the Seas,* which debuted in July 2002, and the new *Jewel,* which is pretty much a carbon copy, are spectacular floating resorts featuring walls of glass, including a bank of ocean-facing, 12-story glass elevators. With this recent class of 2,100-passenger vessels, Royal Caribbean is going for a slightly more upscale, contemporary look. The airy ships successfully borrow a page from upscale sister line Celebrity; these are very pretty vessels.

The *Brilliance* and *Jewel* boast features made popular on earlier Royal Caribbean vessels, including a nine-hole mini-golf course and a rock-climbing wall. The ships add billiards, with tables that are self leveling. But what really sets this class of ship apart is the amount of glass on the exterior (some 110,000

sq. ft. in all). Nearly every public room including the Internet cafe boasts floor-to-ceiling windows.

Both ships have cushy lounges including a champagne bar and a nautically themed Schooner Bar. The multilevel main dining room is an elegant space with a grand staircase. The Windjammer buffet area has stations for hot and cold offerings and an indoor/outdoor seating configuration. At the aft end of Deck 6 on the *Brilliance* is a series of Asian-themed rooms, called the Jakarta Lounge, the Calcutta Card Club, and the Bombay Billiard Club (on the *Jewel,* these rooms are African-themed).

The theaters on these vessels rise three levels. The line's trademark, glass-enclosed Viking Crown Lounge (a flying saucer-shaped space on top of the ship) on this vessel, holds a disco and an intimate cabaret area. The oceanview ShipShape fitness centers offer dozens of machines and a large exercise floor plus massage, beauty, and relaxation therapies.

Kids have their own playroom space equipped with computers and crafts stations, and there is both a video arcade and separate hangout area for teens. Teens get their own pool with a water slide while the littler people get a splash pool all to themselves. The ships present plenty of opportunities for quiet sunning away from the main pool area, including a solarium pool with removable dome.

Cabins & Rates

Cabins	Brochure Rates*	Bathtub	Fridge	Hair Dryer	Sitting Area	TV
Inside	$3,499–$3,699	no	no	yes	no	yes
Outside	$3,999–$4,829	no	some	yes	yes	yes
Suite	$7,899–$20,999	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

**For 12-day cruises*

CABINS The smallest of the cabins on the *Brilliance* and *Jewel* are a reasonable 170 square feet—bigger than on many other ships. In size, accommodations range upwards to the huge (nearly 1,150 square feet, including the veranda) Royal Suite, which also has a whirlpool tub. Most suites come with concierge service. Almost half of the cabins have private verandas and about a third can accommodate third and fourth passengers. All have beds convertible to queen-size, phone, interactive TV (with some 20 channels and pay-per-view movies), safe, and individually controlled air-conditioning. Bathrooms, while not the largest, have good storage space. Seventeen cabins are accessible for travelers with disabilities.

PUBLIC AREAS See "Public Areas" description for *Splendour of the Seas,* above. Virtually all the RCI ships feature the same terrific spaces.

ALTERNATIVE DINING The *Brilliance* and *Jewel* boast two alternative dining venues: an upscale steakhouse (Chops Grille) and an excellent Italian restaurant (Portofino), both operated on a reservations-only basis, for a cover charge of $20. There is also the Seaview Cafe serving a casual menu (chili, burgers, and fries) for no cover charge.

POOL, FITNESS & SPA FACILITIES The ShipShape spa offers a wide selection of treatments, plus steam rooms and saunas. See *Splendour of the Seas*' "Pool, Fitness & Spa Facilities," above, for details about *Brilliance*'s and *Jewel*'s solariums, pools, and facilities on the open deck.

6

The European Lines

These mostly midsize ships are European-owned and operated and offer a different cruise experience than the mainstream American vessels. Most in this category are older, classic ships that hold a lot of appeal for ship buffs, though some have not been kept up as they should be (the teak deck may be covered with outdoor carpet to hide its splinters). There are also some new ships in this category, designed to continue the classic cruise tradition but with more modern amenities (see First European Cruises' *European Stars* and *European Vision* and Royal Olympia's *Olympia Explorer* and *Olympia Voyager* later in this chapter).

We've included the British line Swan Hellenic in this chapter, though this line's ships are more upmarket and somewhat different than the other lines mentioned, most of which are in the budget- to moderate-price category. Similarly, the Italian line, Costa Cruises, offers more of a megaship, mainstream American-style cruise experience.

The Euro lines tend to attract people looking for an affordable cruise, including older couples, families, and singles sharing a cabin. The crowd on these ships is mostly European, and that means lots of languages spoken on public address systems (because of this, announcements may seem to go on forever). It also means, especially on the non-British ships, there may be plenty of people who do not speak English (brush up on your sign language!) and lots of smokers, though some lines, like First European, now ban smoking in the dining rooms. To really enjoy these cruises, American travelers have to be really comfortable with people from other countries.

The vessels will appeal to the more adventurous American traveler who wants something different, the type who stays at European hotels (and not Marriotts or Hiltons) when in Europe. The moderate prices and friendly atmosphere are the big attractions. But keep in mind that these vessels tend to have lots of passengers and can feel crowded.

Onboard activities may be conducted in several languages. For shore excursions, there are usually separate buses for each language, but if there aren't enough English speakers to fill a whole bus, you might have to hear another translation as well.

Cabins tend to be smaller than what Americans are used to (just like rooms in European hotels tend to be smaller than those in American hotels) and you're best off booking a deluxe room or suite if you can afford it. Cabins are likely to have portholes rather than large windows, and few of these vessels have private verandas in any cabin categories.

These ships may be difficult for travelers with disabilities, with few wide-door cabins and, quite often, high doorway sills that would be a major roadblock to wheelchairs.

A Word About SOLAS

The future of some of these older ships will depend on compliance with a set of international safety regulations known as the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), which is predominantly concerned with issues like fire prevention. Ships built after 1994 automatically incorporate SOLAS safety features, such as alarm and sprinkler systems, while ships built before 1994 have been required to add them by a progressive set of deadlines. The most sweeping changes were completed by a 1997 deadline, and another series of changes must be implemented by 2005. You may want to inquire in advance whether a ship is fully equipped for fire safety with smoke detectors, alarms, sprinklers, and low-level emergency lighting for escape pathways. The changes required could prove too costly for the lines that operate some of these old-timers and seal their fate forever—so enjoy them while you can.

The **itineraries** of these ships tend to be port-intensive (usually a port a day), so for many people the nighttime meal will be all the entertainment they need before bed. People at the late seating may mingle till the wee hours. Discos usually quiet down early, and Europeans just aren't as casino-crazy as Americans. Entertainment tends to be much more amateurish than on the American vessels. To appeal to a multi-language crowd, the ships may feature more magicians, singers, and dancers than, say, comedians. Most of these vessels do not have fancy **alternative dining** options: Some Costa and First European vessels, and Swan Hellenic, are exceptions.

DRESS CODES Like the mainstream American lines, weeklong cruises on these ships generally feature two formal nights, but you won't find too many passengers in tuxedos or fancy sequined dresses. Overall, ships in this category are somewhat more casual, with guests preferring suits or sport coats to tuxes, and pantsuits or sundresses to gowns (although it's not unheard of to see a tux and a shimmery dress). Guests are asked not to wear shorts and T-shirts in the formal dining room. Daytime is casual.

Cruise Lines Reviewed in this Chapter

- Costa Cruises
- First European Cruises (Festival Cruises)
- Norwegian Coastal Voyage/Bergen Line Services
- Royal Olympia Cruises
- Swan Hellenic Cruises

1 Costa Cruises

SHIPS IN EUROPE Costa Allegra • Costa Romantica • Costa Classica • Costa Victoria • Costa Atlantica • Costa Tropicale • Costa Europa • Costa Mediterranea • Costa Fortuna and Costa Magica (preview)

200 South Park Rd., Hollywood, FL 33021. ✆ **800/33-COSTA.** www.costacruises.com.

Fun, food, and Italian ambience are what these mid- and mega-size ships are about. Even though it's now owned by Carnival Corporation, the line—with an illustrious history stretching back almost 90 years to Genoa, Italy—has managed to hold onto its heritage, and that's what sets this cruise line apart from so many others.

Costa's European cruises attract a majority of Italians, but the passenger list also includes French, Germans, British, and others. Americans represent only about 20% of the clientele on any given sailing, but that's part of the fun: meeting new people and trying out a few remembered words from high school language classes.

Costa does an excellent job catering to its diverse clientele, but announcements are delivered in five languages on the loudspeakers and at entertainment and activities gatherings, which can get a bit tiring. In the past, smoking has also been a problem—Europeans smoke more than Americans these days—but in 2002, the line banned smoking at least in the main dining room and main showroom on European cruises.

The onboard currency is the euro when ships trawl European waters. During the winter Caribbean and South American season, the currency is the American dollar.

Pros

- **Italian flavor.** The whole onboard atmosphere shows a festive Italian flair.
- **The pasta.** While the rest of the food is fairly standard (but tasty), the handmade pasta really shines.
- **Late-night action.** Despite port-intensive itineraries, people stay up late and party on these vessels. The disco gets going at midnight.

Cons

- **Very few cabins on older ships with private verandas.** The *Costa Atlantica* and *Costa Mediterranea* represent a new style ship for the line; they have verandas on the majority of their outside cabins. But the *Costa Victoria* has none at all, and the other ships just have a few.
- **Lots of languages.** Activities and entertainment are geared to a five-language audience.

Compared with other European lines, here's how Costa rates:

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Outstanding
Enjoyment Factor				✓	
Dining		✓			
Activities				✓	
Children's Program			✓		
Entertainment			✓		
Service			✓		
Overall Value			✓		

THE FLEET

The Costa fleet is diverse, from gleaming megaships to old, rebuilt liners from the 1960s. Of its current fleet of nine, there are four megaships: the 1,928-passenger ***Costa Victoria,*** built in 1996; sister ships, the 2,114-passenger ***Costa Atlantica,*** built in 2000, and the 2,114-passenger ***Costa Mediterranea,*** built in 2003 and the brand new and biggest of the fleet, 2,718-passenger ***Costa Fortuna.*** There is a pair of midsize 1,300-passenger ships, the ***Costa Romantica*** (built in 1993) and the ***Costa Classica*** (built in 1991). There is also the 800-passenger ***Costa Allegra,*** built in 1969 as a container ship and rebuilt as a cruise ship in 1992. Carnival also moved two other ships over to the Costa fleet in 2002. The 1,022-passenger ***Costa Tropicale*** was built in 1981 and previously operated as the Carnival *Tropicale* in the Caribbean. The 1,494-passenger ***Costa Europa*** was built in 1986, and was known previously as Holland America's *Westerdam.* All the ships summer in Europe.

Costa's first new builds since the launch of the *Costa Victoria* in 1996, the 86,000-ton *Costa Atlantica* and *Costa Mediterranea,* represent a new chapter for Costa. They're the first Costa ships to have a substantial number of private verandas; 78% of the ship's cabins are outfitted with them. Costa's even bigger 105,000-ton, 2,720-passenger *Costa Fortuna* debuted in November 2003, and its sister ship, 2,720-passenger ***Costa Magica,*** is due in fall 2004.

PASSENGER PROFILE

This line attracts passengers of all ages, with a good number of couples in their 40s and 50s. Americans on board will be older, experienced travelers, many of whom deliberately avoid all-American megaships and are attracted to Costa's port-intensive itineraries. Costa passengers appreciate a sense of cultural adventure and fun, and like the atmosphere of casual, sophisticated elegance and a sense of romance at which the Italians excel.

The line is a favorite of European honeymooners, and on some sailings from Italy there may be dozens of honeymoon couples on board (an older friend who was on one of these cruises reported it was great fun watching the young couples enjoy their special vacation). Families are also attracted to these cruises, although the number of kids on board is rarely overwhelming (August cruises attract the highest numbers). In the summer, the ships that depart from Italy often fill up with the Italian equivalent of the Carnival "Fun Ship" crowd, which can lead to some lively times.

DINING

Food is well-prepared Continental with Italian influences. Most memorable are the **pastas,** prepared fresh and served with lovely sauces.

The six-course dinners might feature appetizers like fried calamari and Parma ham and melon, as well as a vegetarian appetizer selection, along with soup, salad, and a choice of two pasta dishes such as cannelloni and spaghetti. Among the main courses are roast rack of lamb with an herb crust, salmon with dill sauce, and beef tenderloin in puff pastry. We have heard Americans complain about the quality of the beef, which comes from Argentina rather than the U.S., but we've found it acceptable. Also available on every menu is a **vegetarian entree** such as a vegetable-stuffed artichoke. There is also a **regional choice,** such as deer and juniper berry sauce, a Scandinavian specialty offered as a special 1 night on a Baltic itinerary.

Costa goes out of its way to cater to international tastes and make everyone happy. Hence a table of Americans may be offered off-menu items popular in the States, such as fettuccine Alfredo and Caesar salad.

The **dessert menu** is limited to a few selections, but includes such Italian delights as tiramisu, gelato, and cannelloni siciliani, as well as chocolate soufflé.

Entertainment is part of the dining experience: Much emphasis is placed on headwaiters theatrically tossing pasta or seasoning a salad while diners look on. And most evenings have a theme, with the waiters donning special costumes and singing or dancing. On Mediterranean night, for instance, staff members don the native dress of cultures around the Mediterranean and present a red rose to each woman passenger during dessert. Costa's *Salute e Benessere*—or "Health and Well Being"—menus offer low fat, low carbohydrate, and low cholesterol options. **Vegetarian** selections are also always available; passengers can also request the special vegetarian menu.

One difference that Americans will notice on Costa's European cruises is there is no after-dinner coffee service in the dining room (though coffee is available at bars and lounges). It is available on request, however. As on most lines, cappuccino and espresso count as bar drinks and appear on your bar tab at the end of the cruise. There is no brewed decaf coffee available (instant only).

Most of the ships have a single dining room; the bigger *Costa Victoria* has two and the ones on the *Costa Atlantica* and *Costa Mediterranea* are two decks high. Meals are offered in two seatings, breakfast including a choice of a buffet or menu, lunch served at noon and 1:30pm, and dinner at 7pm and 9pm or 9:15pm. (***Note:*** Late seating on these ships is later than on American ships.) Lavish midnight buffets include a Grand Buffet that takes up half the dining room and includes a half-dozen elaborate ice sculptures and a unique galley buffet (a combination midnight buffet and galley tour).

The Lido restaurant is the venue for fairly standard **casual breakfast and lunch** each day; a few nights during each cruise an informal, buffet-style dinner is also offered in the Lido for those too exhausted from a day in port to sit through a more formal dinner in the dining room (the same menu is offered at the buffet). As a nice touch, tablecloths are put on the tables of the casual eatery for the occasion.

Between meals, a **patisserie** serves espresso, chocolates, and pastries aboard the *Costa Atlantica, Costa Mediterranea, Costa Victoria,* and *Costa Romantica;* and **Romeo's Pizzeria** offers pizza throughout the day and night. On the other ships, pizza, sweets, and other treats are offered during afternoon tea, served in the Lido restaurant. The **wine** list is not extensive and there are no wine stewards.

Room service is offered on a 24-hour basis, but the selection is spartan at best, and, on European cruises, there is a charge (about $2) for delivery.

Costa offers a **gourmet alternative restaurant** on the *Costa Mediterranea, Costa Victoria, Costa Atlantica,* and *Costa Tropicale.* A fee of $20, plus a 15% gratuity for a total of $23 per person, is charged for the experience. The specialty cuisine is Italian on the *Costa Mediterranea, Costa Atlantica,* and *Costa Victoria,* and Brazilian on the *Costa Tropicale.*

Value Special Deals

Passengers booking 120 days before the cruise receive a 30% discount of up to $4,200 per couple, and there's also an early-booking bonus of two free post-cruise hotel nights on select sailings. Rates are cruise-only.

Costa Fleet Itineraries

Ship	Home Ports & Season	Itinerary
Costa Allegra	**12-day Baltics,** Amsterdam (Netherlands) (May–Sept); **11- to 14-day Norway,** Amsterdam (Netherlands) (May–Sept)	**12-day Baltics:** Port calls include Copenhagen (Denmark), Stockholm and Visby (Sweden), Oslo (Norway), St. Petersburg (Russia), Tallinn (Estonia), Gdansk and Gdynia (Poland), Warnemunde (Germany), and Helsinki (Finland); **11- to 14-day Norway:** Port calls may include Bergen, Gravdal, Tromso, Honningsvag, Trondheim, Hellesylt, Geiranger, Magdalene Fjord, Ny Alesund, Longyearbyen, Hammerfest, Molde, and Andalsnes (Norway), Akureyri and Reykiavik (Iceland), Torshavn (Denmark), Invergordon, Lerwich, and Rosyth (Scotland)
Costa Atlantica*	**7-day Baltics,** Copenhagen (Denmark) (May–Sept); **7-day Norway,** Copenhagen (Denmark) (May–Aug)	**7-day Baltics:** Port calls include Stockholm (Sweden), Helsinki (Finland), St. Petersburg (Russia), and Tallinn (Estonia); **7-day Norway:** Port calls include Hellesylt, Geiranger, Flaam, Bergen, Cristians, and Oslo (Norway)
Costa Classica	**7-day W. Med,** Savona (Italy) (Apr–Nov)	**7-day W. Med:** Port calls include Naples and Messina (Italy), Tunis (Tunisia), Palma and Valencia (Spain), and Marseille (France)
Costa Europa	**11-day Baltics,** Amsterdam (Netherlands) (Apr–Sept); **11- to 14-day Norway,** Amsterdam (Netherlands) (May–Sept); **8-day Spain & Portugal,** Savona (Italy) (Sept–Oct)	**11-day Baltics:** Port calls include Ronne (Denmark), St. Petersburg (Russia), Tallinn (Estonia), Stockholm and Visby (Sweden), Copenhagen (Denmark), and Gydnia (Poland); **11- to 14-day Norway:** Port calls may include Bergen, Hellesylt, Geiranger, Trondheim, Honningsvag, Tromso, Olden, Gravdal, Bear Island, Alesund, Magdalen Fjord, Ny Alesund, and Longyearbyen (Norway); **8-day Spain & Portugal:** Port calls include Barcelona, Alicante, Cadiz, and Malaga (Spain), Gibraltar (U.K.), and Lisbon (Portugal)
Costa Fortuna	**7-day W. Med,** Savona (Italy) (Apr–Nov)	**7-day W. Med:** Port calls include Naples and Palermo (Italy), Tunis (Tunisia), Palma and Barcelona (Spain), and Marseille (France)
Costa Mediterranea	**7-day E. Med,** Venice (Italy) (May–Nov)	**7-day E. Med:** Port calls include Bari (Italy), Katakolon (Greece), Kusadasi and Istanbul (Turkey), and Dubrovnik (Croatia)
Costa Romantica*	**10-day Spain & Portugal,** Savona (Italy) (May–Nov)	**10-day Spain & Portugal:** Port calls include Barcelona, Alicante, Malaga, and Cadiz (Spain), Lisbon (Portugal), Casablanca (Morocco), and Gibraltar (U.K.)
Costa Tropicale	**7-day E. Med,** Civitavecchia/Rome (Italy) (May–Nov); **7-day W. Med,** round-trip from Civitavecchia/Rome (Italy) (May–Nov)	**7-day E. Med:** Port calls include Catania (Italy), Patmos and Santorini (Greece), and Bodrum and Marmaris (Turkey); **7-day W. Med:** Port calls include Catania (Italy), Valletta (Malta), Ibiza and Palma (Spain), and Ajaccio (France)
Costa Victoria	**7-day Greece,** Venice (Italy) (Apr–Nov)	**7-day Greece:** Port calls include Bari (Italy), Katakolon, Santorini, Mykonos, and Rhodes (Greece), and Dubrovnik (Croatia)

**Also does Greece and Egypt*
***Also does Canary Islands and Greece/Egypt*

ACTIVITIES

Activities on Costa ships are overseen by a team of "animators," who don costumes like clown suits and Hawaiian shirts and try their best to get everyone involved in the action.

Diversions include **theme nights** such as Carnivale, when people are encouraged to create and wear Venetian-style masks, and a Circus night, when passengers are given tokens and participate in games set up in the lounges, such as throw-the-ball-at-the-target. Popular events also include a nighttime Mr. Universe contest, musical chairs, and Samba Night (lessons are given during the day to prepare for the event). Daytime activities include Italian language and cooking classes as well as such traditional cruise staples as bingo, bridge, napkin-folding, dance classes, Ping-Pong tournaments, exercise classes, beauty demonstrations, trivia games, and fun pool-side competitions. Sports offerings include shuffleboard, paddle tennis, and Ping-Pong, and on some of the ships Foosball and pool tables. Each ship also has a library (although it may not have many English selections) and a card room.

A full-time Catholic priest conducts mass almost every day in the ship's chapel.

CHILDREN'S PROGRAM

The **"Costa Kids Club"** operates fleetwide for children aged 3 to 17. There are three distinct groups. The Baby Club is for 3- to 6-year-olds; the Junior Club for 7 to 12s and the Teens Club for those in the 13 to 17 bracket. There's a dedicated **youth counselor** on each sailing, with additional counselors added based on the number of kids on board.

Youth activities are not offered during days in port. **Group babysitting** is available for an extra charge by request between 6:30 and 11pm. On days at port, it is offered from 8:30am to 12:30pm and from 2:30pm to 6:30pm. Cost is $10 per hour and the minimum age is 3 (and children must be potty trained).

ENTERTAINMENT

Entertainment directors program amusements such as concerts, magic and mime acts, acrobatics, and cabaret that, although produced with an Italian bent, do not require audiences to actually know the language.

If you're not looking for Las Vegas–style glitter, you'll likely find the shows amusing. Particularly notable is the fact the dancers attempt something approaching modern ballet (with some degree of success, too). Costumes and lighting are particularly creative, and the repertoire includes everything from folk music to techno-pop (not necessarily on the same night).

The *Costa Mediterranea, Costa Atlantica, Costa Victoria, Costa Classica,* and *Costa Romantica* have notable showrooms, multitiered affairs that evoke the half moon–shaped amphitheaters of an 18th-century opera house. The other ships have more typical showrooms with pillars blocking some sight lines.

In addition to live shows, the theaters are used for movie screenings that include Pavarotti concerts.

The **casinos** on these ships are large by European standards, and include dozens of slot machines, roulette tables, poker, and blackjack. The **clubs** are popular, and there's always dancing into the wee hours.

SERVICE

While far from pampering, service is more than adequate in both the dining room and cabins. The crew is friendly and quick-witted, though not all speak great English. Dining-room staff is composed of charming Italian waiters, but special culinary requests sometimes get lost in translation.

Costa offers tipping guidelines that include $2.50 for waiter and busboy, $1.50 for cabin steward, and 50¢ for the maitre d'. All tips are per person per day. Tips for cocktails are automatically added; plan to pay 10% on ships sailing European itineraries.

There's no self-service laundry, but the ships do offer laundry and dry-cleaning services.

Costa Allegra

The Verdict

This ship is small enough so you don't get lost, comfortable, and lively, in a special Italian way.



Costa Allegra *(photo: Costa Cruises)*

Specifications

Size (in tons)	30,000	Officers	Italian
Number of Cabins	410	Crew	450 (Int'l)
Number of Outside Cabins	205	Passenger/Crew Ratio	2 to 1
Cabins with Verandas	10	Year Built	1992
Number of Passengers	820	Last Major Refurbishment	2001

Frommer's Ratings (Scale of 1–5)

Cabin Comfort & Amenities	3	Pool, Fitness & Spa Facilities	3
Ship Cleanliness & Maintenance	3	Children's Facilities	2
Public Comfort/Space	4	Decor	4

Originally built in the 1960s, the *Costa Allegra* was completely reconstructed in the early '90s as a cruise ship with modern, Italian decor. The ship has a slightly formal atmosphere, and with most public rooms on Deck 6, guests know where to go to find the action.

The ship offers lots of windows, including a wall of glass in the stern. The dining room has windows on three sides, and the ship looks striking from the rear with its three-deck wall of glass, domed disco on top, and trademark Costa cluster of yellow smokestacks.

Cabins & Rates

Cabins	Brochure Rates*	Bathtub	Fridge	Hair Dryer	Sitting Area	TV
Inside	$3,039–$3,899	no	no	yes	no	yes
Outside	$3,959–$4,899	no	no	yes	no	yes
Suite	$5,709–$7,229	yes	some	yes	yes	yes

**For 12-day Baltics sailings*

CABINS Standard cabins are not particularly large (145–160 sq. ft.), but are comfortable and offer twin beds, good storage space, desk, phone, safe, TV, and hair dryer. Decor is nothing special, with plain white walls and colorful banners added for color.

The *Allegra* has three large (575 sq. ft.) Grand Suites that can sleep five or six and have forward-facing windows. Ten minisuites have verandas. All have a whirlpool bathtub, a sitting area, and two lower twins (which can be put together on request) or a queen-size bed; the Grand Suites also have a wet bar.

The ship has eight cabins accessible for travelers with disabilities.

PUBLIC AREAS There is one dining room, located on Deck 5, enclosed by glass on three sides. The best seats are in the rear of the room, where the windows are larger than even the large portholes on the sides.

Most public rooms are located on Deck 6, are large enough to handle the crowd, and flow easily into each other. There's a large lounge/ballroom at one end, a large showroom at the other, and a large casino (with dozens of slot machines) in between, as well as a bar area with live music. Above the lounge/ballroom, the ship offers a funky round-windowed disco with a glass dome. During the day, the disco, with its panoramic views, doubles as an observation lounge.

Other public rooms include an oceanview library (really just a room with one wall of books, few in English) and card room, plus a fully equipped meeting/conference room. The Murano Bar features striking walls of smoked blue Murano glass illuminated from behind.

The children's room is small, and the show lounge is your typical old-fashioned showroom, with poor sight lines in the rear. If you want to see the dancers' feet, get there early and get a seat in the front, and don't sit behind a pillar.

ALTERNATIVE DINING None.

POOL, FITNESS & SPA FACILITIES The *Allegra* has a jogging deck and a small but well-equipped gym and spa with steam rooms and sauna. The swimming pool has a Jacuzzi and waterfall, as well as a pool bar, and a second Jacuzzi area is located aft behind the disco.

Costa Romantica • Costa Classica

The Verdict

Italophiles will adore these midsize ships that deliver an authentic slice of *la dolce vita.*



Costa Romantica *(photo: Costa Cruises)*

Specifications

Size (in tons)	53,000/53,000	Officers	Italian/Int'l
Number of Cabins	678/654	Crew	610/650 (Int'l)
Number of Outside Cabins	462/428	Passenger/Crew Ratio	2 to 1
Cabins with Verandas	10	Year Built	1993/1991
Number of Passengers	1,356/1,308	Last Major Refurbishment	N/A

Frommer's Ratings (Scale of 1–5)

Cabin Comfort & Amenities	4	Pool, Fitness & Spa Facilities	3
Ship Cleanliness & Maintenance	4	Children's Facilities	3
Public Comfort/Space	3	Decor	4

These ultra-modern sister ships have a cool, European interior design that some people find almost clinical and that contrasts sharply with the lively shipboard atmosphere. The *Classica* is so knock-you-in-the-head modern with its white marble, hip art, metal accents, and glass walls that Costa mellowed its act when building sister ship *Romantica,* adding some wood paneling and warmer colors.

The vessels were the largest and most stylish ships in the Costa armada until 1996, when they were supplanted by *Costa Victoria.* Many passengers are repeat customers, drawn to these vessels for their emphasis on comfort and contemporary Italian design accented with the best of Italy's traditions. The relatively small size means you'll begin to recognize your fellow passengers after a few days at sea. And with the public rooms located on the upper four decks, it's hard to get lost.

Costa Romantica Cabins & Rates

Cabins	Brochure Rates*	Bathtub	Fridge	Hair Dryer	Sitting Area	TV
Inside	$2,169–$3,199	no	no	yes	no	yes
Outside	$2,809–$3,939	no	no	yes	no	yes
Suite	$3,999–$5,369	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

** For 10-day Spain and Portugal cruises.*

Costa Classica Cabins & Rates

Cabins	Brochure Rates	Bathtub	Fridge	Hair Dryer	Sitting Area	TV
Inside	$1,469–$2,339	no	no	yes	no	yes
Outside	$1,859–$2,809	no	no	yes	no	yes
Suite	$2,969–$3,899	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

CABINS In a word, big. At 200 square feet, standard outside cabins are among the largest available on any mainstream cruise line and much bigger than those on most European lines. The well-designed modern cabins are attractively paneled with polished cherrywood and done up in warm colors. Each cabin is furnished with twin beds (some convert to queens), two armchairs, a small table and desk, good-size closets, safes, hair dryers, TV, and music channels.

Lower-end inside cabins are still large at 175 square feet. Ten suites on each ship have verandas. The *Costa Romantica* also has six suites with panoramic, forward-facing windows and 18 minisuites that measure 340 square feet. The suites can all accommodate up to six passengers and are furnished with a queen bed, single sofa bed, and Murphy bed along with sitting area, minibar, double vanity, and whirlpool bath.

Six inside cabins on the *Romantica* and five on the *Classica* are wheelchair-accessible.

PUBLIC AREAS Public areas take their names from the heritage of Italy, and sometimes sport decors to match—for instance, in the *Costa Romantica's* Botticelli Restaurant, murals and window blinds evoke themes from the Renaissance. Classic Italian touches in different areas include chandeliers from Murano, intricate mosaics, pear-wood inlays, and lots and lots of brilliant white Carrara marble. Meanwhile, modern Italian design shows in an abundance of steel, mirrors, and sharp, efficient edges.

Both ships have an outdoor cafe, with access to a frequently replenished buffet that sometimes gets a bit overcrowded, as do some of the other public areas aboard the ship.

One of the most stunning public spaces is the *Costa Romantica's* L'Opera Showroom, which resembles a Renaissance amphitheater complete with tiered seating. Rising two decks high, it contains 6 miles of fiber optics and mosaics inspired by 14th-century models.

The neat, glass-walled circular discos on each ship are high up, affording an opportunity to dance close to the stars.

ALTERNATIVE DINING None.

FITNESS, POOL & SPA FACILITIES These are definitely not ships for fitness fanatics, as facilities consist of a small albeit pleasant gym with a wall of windows, a handful of Stairmasters and treadmills, and sauna, steam, and massage rooms. Because of a lack of exercise space, it's often necessary to conduct aerobics classes in the disco. It's obvious that working out is not a top priority for most passengers, whose only trips to the fitness area, it seems, are to weigh themselves on the scale.

On both ships, the Caracalla Spa has a Turkish bath as well as treatment rooms offering a wide range of massages, wraps, facials, and hydrotherapy baths, but it pales in comparison to the *Costa Victoria*'s Roman-styled spa.

There are two outdoor pools, one with a fountain, and four hot tubs (two on the *Costa Classica*), as well as a jogging track on Deck 11.

Costa Victoria

The Verdict

A sleek megaship with a European ambience and stunning decor, this ship is an all-around beauty.



Costa Victoria *(photo: Costa Cruises)*

Specifications

Size (in tons)	76,000	Officers	Italian/Int'l
Number of Cabins	964	Crew	800 (Int'l)
Number of Outside Cabins	573	Passenger/Crew Ratio	2.4 to 1
Cabins with Verandas	0	Year Built	1996
Number of Passengers	1,928	Last Major Refurbishment	N/A

Frommer's Ratings (Scale of 1–5)

Cabin Comfort & Amenities	4	Pool, Fitness & Spa Facilities	4
Ship Cleanliness & Maintenance	4	Children's Facilities	3
Public Comfort/Space	4	Decor	5

The ship that launched Costa Cruises into the megaship era was built in Bremerhaven, Germany, and inaugurated in the summer of 1996. With an impressive cruising speed of 21 to 23 knots, it has a streamlined, futuristic-looking design with four tiers of glass-fronted observation decks facing the prow. Its mammoth size allows for more spacious and dramatic interior features and more options for dining and after-dark diversions than any other Costa ship. When built, it was the largest and most technologically sophisticated ship ever launched

by Costa, though in 2000, the *Costa Atlantica* (and later, in 2003, the *Costa Mediterranea*) bested it.

The interior is splashier and more colorful than those of other Costa vessels (it feels a bit more like an American ship). Signature design elements include an abundant use of stainless steel, teak, suede, leather, tile mosaics, and Italian marble in swirled patterns of blues and greens—for instance, brilliant royal blue suede covers the tops of card tables, and deep, salmon-colored suede is used on the walls of the Concorde Plaza lounge. The Bolero Buffet features teak floors, and a wraparound tile mosaic creates eye-catching walls in the Capriccio Lounge.

The sleek, seven-story Planetarium Atrium—a Costa first—features four glass elevator banks and is punctuated by a thin string of ice-blue neon subtly spiraling toward the glass ceiling dome. Also a new concept in the Costa fleet is the Victoria's two dining rooms, with two seatings and an abundance of seating for couples (ideal for honeymooners).

Cabins & Rates

Cabins	Brochure Rates	Bathtub	Fridge	Hair Dryer	Sitting Area	TV
Inside	$1,499–$2,429	no	yes	yes	no	yes
Outside	$1,869–$2,999	no	yes	yes	no	yes
Suite	$2,659–$3,839	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

CABINS Ironically, the cabins on this second biggest of Costa ships are smaller than those on the *Romantica* and *Classica.* At 120 to 150 square feet, standard inside and outside cabins certainly won't win any awards for their size (the smallest are like walk-in closets), but their sleek, minimalist design and decor bring a delicious European touch to the cruise experience. Decorative fabric panels hang on the wall above headboards, matching the bedspreads. Bedside tables and dressers have sleek styling. Stainless steel is used for all bathroom sinks, and for dressers and mirrors in the minisuites. All cabins have TVs, music channels, hair dryer, minibar, and safe. Some 60% of them feature oversize round portholes opening onto sea views. None have verandas.

Especially desirable are 14 minisuites, which have separate living rooms, reading areas, and tubs with hydro-massage equipment. Each is outfitted with one queen-size bed and two Pullman-style beds. What makes them a bargain is that they contain many of the same amenities and interior design features as the more expensive suites, and their space is very generous at 301 square feet. For those with imperial taste, six full-size suites raise the beam on luxury, with one queen and two Pullman-style beds and generous 430-square-foot proportions that make them feel roomy even if they're bunking four passengers. Furnishings in these suites are made of pear wood, with fabrics by Laura Ashley, who is not even remotely Italian, and whose particular patterns in this case are relatively bold and not particularly frilly looking. Some of the suites have floor-to-ceiling windows.

Four of the ship's cabins are specifically outfitted for passengers with disabilities. Cabins on Deck 6A don't benefit from direct elevator access, and require that guests climb a half-flight of stairs from the nearest elevator bank.

PUBLIC AREAS Public areas throb with color and energy, especially the big and brassy Monte Carlo Casino, which is linked to the Grand Bar Orpheus one floor below by a curving stairway whose glass stair treads are illuminated in patterns that are almost psychedelic. This bar is the preferred spot aboard for sampling an espresso or cappuccino, or, if it's late enough, a selection of grappas.

Designed to re-create an Italian piazza, the four-story Concorde Plaza is one of the Victoria's signature public areas. Seating over 300, it boasts a four-story-high waterfall on one end and a wall of windows facing the sea on the other. It makes a great venue for evening dancing and music or for a relaxing drink by day.

Other public rooms include a play area for children, a club for teens, three conference rooms, an array of boutiques, a card room, a library, a disco, and an observation lounge that serves as a grand arena for socializing and special shipboard events and as a theater for evening entertainment.

ALTERNATIVE DINING The multifunction Tavernetta Lounge on Deck 12 is a gourmet restaurant inspired by the famous Zeffirino restaurant in Italy (where guests including Frank Sinatra and Pope John Paul II have dined). The cost to eat here is $20 per person.

POOL, FITNESS & SPA FACILITIES The *Victoria's* Pompeii Spa includes its own indoor pool, done with richly colored mosaic tiles and Roman columns. You can release your tensions in a steam bath, a sauna, or a Turkish bath, or sit and soak in the spa's Jacuzzi, which is perched artfully within the larger waters of the heated swimming pool. The attractive but smallish workout room shares a glass wall with the spa and pool area and features over a dozen exercise machines.

Out on deck, there's a pair of swimming pools as well as a "misting pool" that cools off overheated sunbathers with fine jets of water. Further decks wrap around the pools and their sunbathing area, providing plenty of space for passengers to stretch out and soak up the rays, even when the ship is fully booked. It looks like a resort on the Italian Riviera with its bright yellow and blue deck chairs and its nautical blue-and-white-striped lounges. There are four Jacuzzis, a tennis court that doubles as a half-size basketball court, and a jogging track, four circuits of which equal 1 mile. There's also a beauty salon aboard.

Costa Atlantica • Costa Mediterranea

The Verdict

These sister ships add all the American-style amenities to Costa's Italian cruise experience—giving them "all around" best awards in the fleet.



Costa Atlantica *(photo: Costa Cruises)*

Specifications

Size (in tons)	86,000	Officers	Italian/Int'l
Number of Cabins	1,057	Crew	920 (Int'l)
Number of Outside Cabins	845	Passenger/Crew Ratio	2.3 to 1
Cabins with Verandas	678	Year Built	2000/2003
Number of Passengers	2,114	Last Major Refurbishment	N/A

Frommer's Ratings (Scale of 1–5)

Cabin Comfort & Amenities	5	Pool, Fitness & Spa Facilities	5
Ship Cleanliness & Maintenance	4	Children's Facilities	4
Public Comfort/Space	5	Decor	5

Costa officials were downright gleeful about the arrivals of the 86,000-ton *Costa Atlantica* and *Costa Mediterranea,* the line's first new ships since the *Costa Victoria* in 1996. Their elation is well founded: The vessels, which were built in Finland, are big and brash in the style of Carnival Cruise Line's highly successful "Fun Ships." In fact, they feature a similar layout as *Carnival Spirit* (and sister ships *Legend* and *Pride*), differing only in cosmetic and decor touches. The ships cost a cool $400 million each and offer American-style resort amenities including an indoor/outdoor pool space, a big gym and spa, and a wide choice of entertainment options.

From the moment you step on board, the ship elicits wows. The decor, as overseen by legendary Carnival designer Joe Farcus, is quite colorful, modern, and glitzy, created with Italian materials such as Murano glass, Carrara marble, and mosaic tile. *Costa Atlantica's* theme is a take-off on Fellini films while *Costa Mediterranea's* decor features a funky ode-to-palazzo theme.

Despite their size, it's fairly easy to find your way to the numerous bars, lounges, and activities.

Costa Atlantica* Cabins & Rates

Cabins	Brochure Rates	Bathtub	Fridge	Hair Dryer	Sitting Area	TV
Inside	$1,699–$2,259	no	yes	yes	no	yes
Outside	$2,039–$3,209	no	yes	yes	yes	yes
Suite	$3,009–$4,159	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

Costa Mediterranea** Cabins & Rates

Cabins	Brochure Rates	Bathtub	Fridge	Hair Dryer	Sitting Area	TV
Inside	$1,499–$2,259	no	yes	yes	no	yes
Outside	$1,799–$3,069	no	yes	yes	yes	yes
Suite	$2,529–$4,159	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

** For 7-day Baltics*
*** For 7-day E. Med*

CABINS These ships add something that Costa has been lacking: lots of cabins with verandas. In fact, nearly 78% of the cabins on *Costa Atlantica* and *Costa Mediterranea* offer them, starting with mid-priced cabins and including three levels of suites: regular, Panorama, and Grand. And the cabins are decently sized at that. All cabins come with hair dryers, minibars, safes, phones, and TVs and some have sitting areas featuring leather sofas with nifty storage drawers underneath and large vanity areas. Bathrooms offer plenty of shelf space and bigger showers than on the earlier Costa ships. All the suites also come with whirlpool baths and sitting areas.

PUBLIC AREAS *Costa Atlantica's* 12 passenger decks are all named for Fellini films, such as *Ginger and Fred, 8½, La Strada, Amarcord,* and *La Dolce Vita.* Claudia Cardinale, the star of *8½,* even christened the vessel. Public rooms are big, from the two-deck disco to the two-deck dining room (with 1,300 seats). A favorite space, Caffe Florian, is a Venetian-style cafe modeled on the famous 18th-century Caffe Florian in Venice's St. Mark's Square; it serves specialty coffees and drinks. Among the numerous bars and lounges, the Madame Butterfly Grand Lounge comes complete with geisha waitresses, and the Coral Lounge has fake coral on the walls. The library doubles as an Internet cafe, but the computers

are clearly more the focus than books (in fact, it's downright annoying to read with all the clicking). Kids get a big video arcade and a play area with a tunnel system they can climb through.

While facilities are similar on *Costa Mediterranea,* the public rooms are designed after the more mellow theme of historic palazzos in Italy. Favorite spaces include the whimsical Atrium Bar, the Piazza Casanova, and the Roero Lounge.

ALTERNATIVE DINING On *Costa Atlantica,* the alternative, reservations-only restaurant Club Atlantica occupies a two-deck space on top of the ship. On *Costa Mediterranea,* it's called Club Medusa. In both cases, dinner there is an extra $23 per person. Cuisine is Italian and based on recipes of Gualtiero Marchesi, a famous Italian chef.

POOL, FITNESS & SPA FACILITIES Each ship has three swimming pools, one with a retractable glass roof, as well as a separate kiddie pool and a stand-alone water slide. The ship's oceanview spa and fitness center is two decks high and offers the latest equipment, including Technogym machines that have keys to remember your settings. The interesting tiered design offers equipment on several levels, all facing a wall of windows so you won't miss any views when you work out. The spa offers a dozen treatment rooms, a nice beauty salon, and a sunning area with a large whirlpool. The ship offers lots of open deck space for outdoor sunning.

Costa Europa

The Verdict

Costa Europa's old-world Mediterranean style is cozy and reminiscent of cruises of yesteryear.



Costa Europa *(photo: Costa Cruises)*

Specifications

Size (in tons)	54,000	Officers	Italian/Int'l
Number of Cabins	747	Crew	612 (Int'l)
Number of Outside Cabins	421	Passenger/Crew Ratio	2.3 to 1
Cabins with Verandas	0	Year Built	1986
Number of Passengers	1,494	Last Major Refurbishment	2002

Frommer's Ratings (Scale of 1–5)

Cabin Comfort & Amenities	3	Pool, Fitness & Spa Facilities	3
Ship Cleanliness & Maintenance	4	Children's Facilities	3
Public Comfort/Space	3	Decor	4

Originally built in 1986, *Costa Europa* formerly sailed as Holland America's *Westerdam* until being transferred to Costa's fleet (and then refurbished) in 2002. The ship hearkens back to the past with an elegant look—the use of marble and softly colored wood paneling runs throughout—but its refurbishment since coming to Costa means there's a lot of fresh color and verve. Decks are named after Greek constellations.

CABINS Cabins are relatively roomy—insides run from 153 square feet, ocean views from 189 square feet. Even the inside cabins have a seating area. Decor is warm, with fabrics in Laura Ashley–esque florals. There's plenty of storage space. Bathrooms are roomy, though they are shower-only, except for suites. The suites are comparatively huge at 414 square feet and have a combination seating area/sleeping area. All staterooms are air-conditioned and equipped with phones, television, safe-deposit box, and hair dryer.

Cabins & Rates

Cabins	Brochure Rates*	Bathtub	Fridge	Hair Dryer	Sitting Area	TV
Inside	$2,509–$3,979	no	no	yes	no	yes
Outside	$3,229–$6,109	no	no	yes	no	yes
Suite	$5,269–$7,229	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

**For 10-day Baltics and 11-day Norway sailings.*

PUBLIC AREAS The Medusa Ballroom—you basically have to pass through it to get anywhere on the main public area deck—is the place to meet 'n' greet, whether for pre-dinner cocktails or after the evening show. Other favorites include the Orfeo Cinema (with its big comfy chairs that recline) and the cozy Delo Bar.

ALTERNATIVE DINING There's no separate restaurant, beyond the main Orion dining room, but the Sirens Buffet does serve casual fare at dinnertime.

POOL, FITNESS & SPA FACILITIES There are two pools on *Costa Europa;* one with a magrodome (removable dome) that closes during inclement weather, and a smaller version, located aft. The Nereidi Fitness Center incorporates the spa and the workout area; like other Costa ships, it uses the computerized Technogym equipment which allows you to keep track of your program. There's also space for aerobics.

Costa Tropicale

The Verdict

With its festive South American decor, *Costa Tropicale* offers an intimate and playful experience.



Costa Tropicale *(photo: Costa Cruises)*

Specifications:

Size (in tons)	36,700	Officers	Italian/Int'l
Number of Cabins	514	Crew	550 (Int'l)
Number of Outside Cabins	326	Passenger/Crew Ratio	2.3 to 1
Cabins with Verandas	12	Year Built	1982
Number of Passengers	1,022	Last Major Refurbishment	2001

Frommer's Ratings (Scale of 1–5)

Cabin Comfort & Amenities	3	Pool, Fitness & Spa Facilities	3
Ship Cleanliness & Maintenance	4	Children's Facilities	3
Public Comfort/Space	4	Decor	4

The 36,000-ton *Costa Tropicale* came to Costa from the Carnival fleet, where it was one of that line's oldest and smallest vessels. As part of its move to Costa, the ship, which was built in 1982, got a $25-million refurbishment. Improvements included complete, floor-to-ceiling upgrades of all public areas and cabins, plus the widening of some decks. Also added: a new pizzeria, and a reservations-only alternative dining restaurant, Club Bahia, which serves Brazilian cuisine (for a cover charge of $23). The ship's dolphin-shaped Carnival funnel was also replaced with Costa's signature yellow smokestack. *Costa Tropicale* carries 1,022 passengers, and offers 514 cabins including 12 suites with private verandas.

The decor is based on the music, rhythms, and ambience of the tropics.

CABINS Cabins are cozy, outfitted with warm woods and brightly colored bed coverings. Only mini suites have balconies, but size-wise, the cabins are generous enough, especially for an older ship. Inside cabins are 170 square feet and oceanview staterooms measure 186 square feet; the expansive mini suites, at 400 square feet including the veranda, are worth the splurge. All staterooms are equipped with direct dial phones, televisions, hair dryers, and safe-deposit boxes; electrical outlets have currents at both 220/110v.

Cabins & Rates

Cabins	Brochure Rates	Bathtub	Fridge	Hair Dryer	Sitting Area	TV
Inside	$1,429–$2,169	no	no	yes	no	yes
Outside	$1,679–$2,539	no	no	yes	no	yes
Suite	$2,269–$2,969	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

PUBLIC AREAS Tying in with its tropical theme, public rooms include the Tropicana Showroom, the Casablanca Gran Bar, Habana Casino, and the Miami Ballroom. The ship has a 17-station Internet cafe and the usual cruise boutiques. For kids, activities are centered around the Squok Club Children's Room.

Preview: *Costa Fortuna* & *Costa Magica*

At press time, a new and bigger class of ship for Costa was in the works. The 2,720-passenger, 105,000-ton *Costa Fortuna* debuted in November 2003, to be followed by sister *Costa Magica* about a year later. Of the 1,358 cabins, 853 will offer ocean views, 522 of them with private balconies; the ships share the same hull design as the Carnival *Triumph* and *Victory.* Carnival design guru Joe Farcus is behind their decor, so expect lots of color and whimsy. Built by Fincantieri at Genoa's Sestri Ponente shipyards, at a price tag of $400 million each. Not only will these be the largest cruise ships to ever fly the Italian flag, they are the largest passenger ships ever built by the historic yard (whose largest previous vessel was the famed 45,911-ton transatlantic liner *Michelangelo,* inaugurated in 1965). With this in mind, the interior design and names of public areas on the *Costa Fortuna* will reflect the legendary Italian steamships that used to offer regular passenger services between Italy and the Americas. Rates on *Costa Fortuna* run $1,559 to $2,329 inside, $2,009 to 2,959 outside, and $2,599 to $4,159 suites.

ALTERNATIVE DINING The Bahia Club Bar & Restaurant, with a Brazilian theme, is the ship's splashy alternative restaurant; there's a $23 per passenger service charge.

POOL, FITNESS & SPA FACILITIES The centerpiece of Costa's daytime scene is the Giada Pool and Solarium. In addition, the ship has a smaller facility, Sermaldo, located aft. There is a wading pool in the kids' Squok Club. The Olympia Gym and Ischia Spa is a gorgeous two-level facility, including men's and women's saunas and health clubs; the spa itself offers the usual treatments and a beauty salon. Costa's unique fitness equipment is featured on *Costa Tropicale.* Called the Technogym system, it allows passengers to keep track of workout levels by keying in, at each piece of equipment, their individual routines. The ship also has a running track that circles the main pool area.

2 First European Cruises (Festival Cruises)

SHIPS IN EUROPE Azur • European Stars • European Vision • Mistral

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A popular line in Europe, First European, like Costa, has long operated midsize ships (older, but well-maintained) with a friendly, informal atmosphere and first-rate itineraries. Now, it also is designing and building contemporary new ships with all the expected amenities, from alternative restaurants to high numbers of balcony cabins. To differentiate the options, the line has branded the cruises on the state-of-the-art ships—the *Mistral, European Vision,* and *European Stars*—as "Premium Cruises," with an onboard experience that includes fancy spas, alternative dining, golf simulators, and Internet cafes. *Azur,* the only remaining older vessel, offers "Discovery Cruises," with more destination-focused itineraries. Two new, 2,000-passenger ships are slated for debut in late 2004 and 2005.

Azur can seem crowded at times, particularly in high season; lines at disembarkation and at buffets are not uncommon. Cabins on all the ships—both new and old—tend to be small, so if you've got the bucks you're best off booking a deluxe cabin or suite.

The ships cater to both Europeans and Americans, with the newer vessels attracting a larger share of Americans and other English-speaking guests. All prices for drinks, shore excursions, and so forth are listed in euros.

Due to the pan-European clientele aboard, communication with fellow passengers can get tricky, and announcements in English, German, French, Italian, and sometimes Spanish, as well, are near constant, since it takes so long to get through all the languages. Onboard activities and shore excursions are also conducted in a variety of languages. The ships offer particularly good onboard duty-free shopping opportunities.

In an effort to differentiate itself from other European operators, First European in 2003 unveiled an entirely new program. "Hilton Floating Resorts on Festival Cruises" adds a variety of additional amenities and services to the cruise experience. The program is available on *European Stars, European Vision,* and *Mistral.* Passengers who book these specially-designated suites get, in addition to usual services, personalized check-in, priority embarkation and disembarkation, Hilton-branded toiletries and robes, special in-cabin breakfasts, and 20% off the wine list, among other features. Prices run about 8% over the usual suite fare.

Compared with other European lines, here's how First European rates:

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Outstanding
Enjoyment Factor				✓	
Dining				✓	
Activities			✓		
Children's Program			✓		
Entertainment		✓			
Service		✓			
Overall Value			✓		

Pros

- **Cuisine.** Great food, designed to please a variety of palates.
- **Public rooms.** There's a good variety for ships of this size.
- **Unusual itineraries.** Ports of call go beyond the norm.

Cons

- **No verandas on the older *Azur.*** Of course, this is a "con" only if you want a veranda cabin.
- **Incessant announcements.** There's a constant babble of public address announcements in multiple languages.

THE FLEET

The ***Azur,*** the line's first ship, was built in 1971 as a ferry and later remodeled into a classic-style cruise ship.

The ***Mistral*** is a midsize vessel that's very contemporary; cabins include 80 suites with verandas, and there is a good variety of public rooms. With ***European Stars*** and ***European Vision,*** built for the line at Chantiers de l'Atlantique shipyards in St-Nazaire, France, the line has even more finely honed its contemporary ambience.

PASSENGER PROFILE

The passenger mix aboard is mostly a middle-class, budget-conscious European one, and includes everyone from kids and young singles to retirees. The most-represented nationalities are Italian and German. The line draws anywhere from 5% to 20% of its passengers from the U.S. with the higher numbers booking on Caribbean cruises.

Passengers tend to enjoy the open deck space when the ship is not in port, and the majority goes to bed pretty early at night. Because we're talking Europeans, there will be lots of smokers, though the company has made dining rooms off-limits.

DINING

The line handles well the differing food tastes of its international crowd, offering a good variety of meat, chicken, and fish dishes. Pastas are particularly tasty.

The main dining room on the *Azur* is large and can get noisy. Those on the newer ships are an improvement; the *Mistral, European Vision,* and *European Stars* also each boast an alternative dining venue that offers both indoor and outdoor dining and cuisine cooked to order for about 19€ ($22); suite guests get to eat there free every night. Most people prefer to take three meals a day in the dining rooms, but there are also deck buffets for breakfast and lunch, as well as midnight buffets and afternoon tea. *European Stars* and *European Vision* also have 24-hour cafes.

Value Special Deals

Book at least 120 days in advance and save 15%. The line also offers deep discounts on cruises that aren't selling (look for these a couple of months before the sailings). They also feature highly reduced rates for kids ages 2 to 17 sharing a cabin with their parents.

First European Fleet Itineraries

Ship	Home Ports & Season	Itinerary
Azur	**10-day E. Med,** Venice (Italy) (year-round)	**10-day E. Med:** Port calls include Dubrovnik (Croatia), Rhodes, Katakolon, and Piraeus/Athens (Greece), Limassol (Cyprus), Antalya (Turkey), and Alexandria (Egypt)
European Stars*	**7-day W. Med,** Genoa (Italy), Barcelona (Spain) (Apr–Oct)	**7-day W. Med:** Port calls may include Marseille (France), Genoa, Naples, and Messina (Italy), Valletta (Malta), Tunis (Tunisia), and Barcelona and Palma (Spain)
European Vision	**7-day Greece,** Venice (Italy) (May–Nov)	**7-day Greece:** Port calls include Dubrovnik (Croatia), Corfu, Santorini, Mykonos, Rhodes, and Piraeus/Athens (Greece)
Mistral	**7-day Baltics,** Kiel (Germany) (May–Sept); **7-day Norway,** round-trip from Kiel (Germany) (May–Sept); **12-day E. Med,** round-trip from Genoa (Italy) (Sept–Nov)	**7-day Baltics:** Port calls include Bisby and Stockholm (Sweden), Tallinn (Estonia), St. Petersburg (Russia), and Copenhagen (Denmark); **7-day Norway:** Port calls include Flaam, Hellesylt, Geiranger, Stavanger, and Oslo (Norway) and Copenhagen (Denmark); **12-day E. Med:** Port calls include Marseille (France), Valletta (Malta), Katakolon, Piraeus/Athens, and Rhodes (Greece), Alexandria (Egypt), and Civitavechhia/Rome (Italy)

** Also does 10-day Canary Islands out of Genoa (Italy)*

There is **24-hour room service,** but from a limited menu. Pizza is served late at night at the bars. **Vegetarian** and light items are available, but are not always on the menu. You should notify the maitre d' of your needs when you get aboard. Smoking is not permitted in the dining rooms.

ACTIVITIES

Daytime activities include multilanguage quiz games, scavenger hunts, volleyball and basketball, dance lessons, lectures, bingo, pool games, and aerobics classes, but most people are happy to just stretch out on the generously sized decks. Bargain hunters will want to give the onboard gift shops a workout (the duty-free prices are great).

The **spas** on the *Mistral, European Vision,* and *European Stars* are operated by an Italian spa company, and offer standard services and prices.

One English-language film is shown in each ship's cinema each day, and on the new ships there are also movie choices on TV. TVs on the newer ships are interactive (you can check your onboard account and so on).

The **casinos** are small by U.S. cruise ship standards (Europeans aren't as fond of gambling as Americans), and offer roulette, blackjack, poker, and slots. The *European Vision* and *European Stars* boast Internet cafes (the *Mistral* also has a few computer stations) and the fee is .95€ ($1.10) per minute; packages are also available.

CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS

These ships are family-friendly, and kids get a variety of supervised daily activities, including crafts and games. All the ships, except for the *Azur,* feature kiddie

pools. On *European Vision* and *European Stars,* there are also video reality game rooms and children's facilities, plus a teen center. Keep in mind the multinational ambience on these ships translates to the kids' programs as well. It can be a great experience for kids to mingle with their peers from other countries, but they should be forewarned that not everyone will speak English. **Babysitting** is available on all the ships.

ENTERTAINMENT

Entertainment includes acts that are musical or visual—for instance, dancers and magicians—and thus can appeal to people speaking a variety of languages. These ships offer a variety of nightclubs and bars (including a cigar bar on the new ships) and discos. Karaoke is a popular offering.

SERVICE

Service is warm and friendly but not very refined. The crew is well versed in English, and a good crew-to-passenger ratio means you can nearly always find a helping hand. The European officers can be downright charming. Gratuities of 7€ ($8.05) per day are automatically added to shipboard accounts to cover tips for the cabin and dining room crew (you can adjust the amount up or down at the end of your cruise as you see fit)—except on *Azur,* which still operates with the "old fashioned" envelope system. On *Azur,* recommended daily tipping is 2.50€ ($2.90). Laundry service is available (but there are no self-service machines) and no dry cleaning.

Azur

The Verdict

This older ship offers a friendly, informal cruise experience well suited to first-timers and those who don't care much about big-ship amenities.



Azur *(photo: First European)*

Specifications

Size (in tons)	15,000	Officers	French/Greek
Number of Cabins	360	Crew	330 (Int'l)
Number of Outside Cabins	178	Passenger/Crew Ratio	2 to 1
Cabins with Verandas	0	Year Built	1971
Number of Passengers	800	Last Major Refurbishment	1997

Frommer's Ratings (Scale of 1–5)

Cabin Comfort & Amenities	2	Pool, Fitness & Spa Facilities	3
Ship Cleanliness & Maintenance	3	Children's Facilities	3
Public Comfort/Space	3	Decor	2

Built as a ferry in 1971 and remodeled shortly thereafter into a cruise ship, the *Azur* is a friendly ship with classical appeal. There's plenty of open deck space, spacious public rooms, and several bars.

Cabins & Rates

Cabins	Brochure Rates*	Bathtub	Fridge	Hair Dryer	Sitting Area	TV
Inside	$800–$1,550	no	no	no	no	no
Outside	$1,000–$1,820	no	no	no	no	no
Suite	$1,290–$2,150	yes	no	no	some	no

**For 10-day E. Med. Rates do not include port charges of $110.*

CABINS The cabins are well-designed but small by American standards, with bright, mod appeal (think oranges and bright blues). The suites, at 204 square feet, have picture windows, bathtubs, and sitting areas. All cabins have two music channels and phones, but no TVs.

Two cabins are accessible to passengers with disabilities.

PUBLIC AREAS Large is the word. There's a large, bright, and sometimes noisy restaurant and two large lounges. The Tahiti Disco faces one of two swimming pools, while the Pacific Lounge has picture windows on three sides for nice views. There are also a number of bars, a small casino (with blackjack, slots, and roulette), a children's playroom, a library, and a nice cinema with real theater seats and even a balcony.

ALTERNATIVE DINING None.

POOL, FITNESS & SPA FACILITIES There are two swimming pools, one with a retractable roof. The ship has a small fitness center, sauna, and massage rooms. Deck sports include volleyball, basketball, and Ping-Pong. Aerobics classes are also offered.

Mistral

The Verdict

This ship moved First European way up the evolutionary ladder, offering a lot of the amenities you'd only expect to find on a larger ship, but in a friendly and intimate setting.



Mistral *(photo: First European)*

Specifications

Size (in tons)	48,000	Officers	Greek
Number of Cabins	598	Crew	500 (Int'l)
Number of Outside Cabins	362	Passenger/Crew Ratio	2.4 to 1
Cabins with Verandas	80	Year Built	1999
Number of Passengers	1,200	Last Major Refurbishment	1999

Frommer's Ratings (Scale of 1–5)

Cabin Comfort & Amenities	4	Pool, Fitness & Spa Facilities	4
Ship Cleanliness & Maintenance	5	Children's Facilities	4
Public Comfort/Space	4	Decor	5

Launched in the summer of 1999, and built at Chanters de l'Atlantique in St-Nazaire, France, the 209€ million ($240 million) *Mistral* offers a friendly and smart interior designed by a Greek firm that also worked on Celebrity Cruises' vessels. Each deck is named after a European city: Paris, Rome, London, Berlin, Brussels, Athens, Cannes, and Madrid.

The ship offers several dining options including an alternative restaurant. It also boasts an outdoor thalassotherapy center (a big whirlpool tub) and 80 large suites with verandas—unusual for a moderately priced vessel.

Cabins & Rates

Cabins	Brochure Rates*	Bathtub	Fridge	Hair Dryer	Sitting Area	TV
Inside	$1,000–$1,480	no	yes	yes	no	yes
Outside	$1,380–$1,920	no	yes	yes	no	yes
Suite	$1,920–$2,200	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

**Rates do not include port charges of $90–$110.*

CABINS All the cabins are a comfortable 150 square feet, and the 80 mini-suites with verandas are 236 square feet (including veranda). All cabins are nicely decorated and have interactive TVs, phones, radios, minibars, safes, hair dryers, and writing areas, as well as a good amount of storage space. The lowest category cabins have bunk beds, making them suitable for families or singles trying to save a buck. The suites have sitting areas, bathtubs, and VCRs. Two cabins are wheelchair accessible.

PUBLIC AREAS The ship was designed with both Europeans and Americans in mind. For instance, there's a small casino that can be expanded by using the conference room next door. The ship has a two-story atrium with a grand piano and black granite waterfall sculpture. The main restaurant boasts an Art Deco style. There are numerous bars and lounges. The multideck show lounge was built without pillars for great sight lines, and there's a cigar bar and library cleverly tucked under its slope.

The vessel also has both children's and teens' playrooms, a coffee bar, and several shops, as well as a particularly well-equipped medical center with dialysis machines (as required by French regulations).

ALTERNATIVE DINING The Rialto alternative restaurant is particularly lovely, done up with Portuguese tile and offering both indoor and outdoor dining, and made-to-order cuisine. Passengers in the ship's minisuites dine there every night, while other passengers can book tables in the restaurant on a reservations-only basis, for a fee of 19€ ($22).

POOL, FITNESS & SPA FACILITIES Outdoors, spa offerings include a thalassotherapy pool, while inside there's a rainforest shower, thermal suites, and an aromatic steam room, as well as sauna and massage areas and a beauty salon—all operated by Steiner. The *Mistral* also has two swimming pools and a good-size gym with up-to-date machines.

European Vision • European Stars

The Verdict

An evolution beyond even *Mistral,* these sister ships offer a contemporary cruising experience with all the expected amenities.



European Stars *(photo: First European)*

Specifications

Size (in tons)	58,700	Officers	Greek/Italian
Number of Cabins	783	Crew	711
Number of Outside Cabins	377	Passenger/Crew Ratio	2 to 1
Cabins with Verandas	132	Year Built	2001/2002
Number of Passengers	1,500	Last Major Refurbishment	N/A

Frommer's Ratings (Scale of 1–5)

Cabin Comfort & Amenities	4	Pool, Fitness & Spa Facilities	4
Ship Cleanliness & Maintenance	4	Children's Facilities	4
Public Comfort/Space	5	Decor	5

European Vision and *European Stars* are First European's first vessels to compete genuinely with the international contemporary cruise scene. Like their sibling *Mistral,* the ships were built at France's Chantiers de l'Atlantique shipyards. The vessels blend an enticingly Italian atmosphere with the services and amenities—Internet cafes, a plethora of cabins with balconies, a rock-climbing wall, and alternative restaurants—that are necessary to attract higher percentages of American and pan-European travelers. Of course, with such a broad demographic, expect shipwide announcements (not to mention the daily issue of Festival news) to come in five languages. Smoking is permitted everywhere but in the dining rooms.

CABINS *European Vision* and *European Stars* have only four stateroom categories: suite, mini-suite, standard outside, and standard inside. All cabins feature twin beds that convert to queen beds, interactive television, minibar, telephone, radio, and in-cabin Internet access. Suites and mini-suites, additionally, boast balconies and a small sitting area with love seat. Bathrooms have bathtubs as well as showers.

Cabins & Rates

Cabins	Brochure Rates*	Bathtub	Fridge	Hair Dryer	Sitting Area	TV
Inside	$960–$1,550	no	yes	yes	no	yes
Outside	$1,220–$1,820	no	yes	yes	no	yes
Suite	$1,550–$2,150	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

**Rates do not include port charges of $90.*

PUBLIC AREAS The layout of these two ships will spring no surprises on Americans used to sailing on contemporary lines like Princess and Carnival. On mid-level decks, you'll find hangout spots such as a coffee bar (Caffe San Marco on *European Vision,* Caffe Greco on *European Stars*), a British-Irish themed pub and other cocktail lounges, an Internet cafe, casino, duty-free shops, and even conference facilities. Each has an ornate two-deck-high main theater. In addition, each has a top-deck disco and cigar bar.

ALTERNATIVE DINING On *European Vision,* the elegant La Pergola offers alfresco seating, and serves northern Italian fare. DaGiacomo, with a very similar layout, is the alternative eatery on *European Stars.* Both charge a per-person fee of 25€ ($28.75) and are free to suite-holders.

POOL FITNESS & SPA FACILITIES This is one area where First European really upgraded its offerings. The spa, operated by a company from Genoa, includes treatment rooms, a thalassotherapy pool, and rainforest shower. There's also a fully equipped gym and beauty salon. Unique features also include rock-climbing walls, a mini-golf course, basketball courts, and a volleyball net. There are four (all outdoor) pools, along with whirlpools.

3 Norwegian Coastal Voyage

SHIPS IN EUROPE Finnmarken • Kong Harald • Lofoten • Midnatsol • Narvik • Nordkapp • Nordlys • Nordnorge • Polarlys • Richard With • Trollfjord • Vesteralen

405 Park Ave., New York, NY 10022. ✆ **800/323-7436** or 212/319-1300. Fax 212/319-1390. www.coastalvoyage.com.

The Norwegian Coastal Voyage offers a comfortable, moderately priced way to visit normally expensive Norway and to get to know its people, towns, and wonderful mountain and island scenery. The line's small- and midsize ships operate year-round and offer 12-day round-trip itineraries that begin in Bergen and call at 35 coastal ports, from tiny villages to sizable cities, en route to Kirkenes at the very top of Norway. Short, one-way north- or southbound trips are also available. These ships carry cargo and vehicles as well as passengers and are considered a daily lifeline to some coastal and island regions.

The entertainment on these voyages is the scenery, the port arrivals and departures, and your fellow passengers; there are no evening shows or casinos aboard. Open stretches of sea, some lasting up to 24 hours long and others for just a few hours, can produce swells and even quite stormy weather, especially just north of Bergen at the North Cape. Temperatures are typical of a cool maritime climate, so prepare for cool weather.

Pros

- **A thrifty way to see Norway.** The voyages are moderately priced compared to a land itinerary in this expensive country.
- **Shows you beautiful Norway up close.** As these are coastal ships, they stay near to land and stop frequently.
- **Every season has its attractions.** In the late spring to early summer you see 24 hours of daylight (plus, above the Arctic Circle, the midnight sun in a narrower band of time), in the late summer and early fall you get the changing colors, and in the winter you can see the Northern Lights.

Cons

- **Ships do not penetrate the deepest fjords.** Unlike cruise ships that visit the most famous Norwegian fjords, the coastal fleet, while navigating some narrow passages, hugs the coast and threads a route among the islands.
- **The food is somewhat repetitious.** If you take the complete 12-day voyage, the food takes on a certain sameness.
- **Little time in port.** A lot of the port calls are for less than an hour (just enough time allowed to unload and load).

Compared with other European lines, here's how Norwegian Coastal Voyage rates:

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Outstanding
Enjoyment Factor					✓
Dining			✓		
Activities	N/A				
Children's Program	N/A				
Entertainment	N/A				
Service			✓		
Overall Value				✓	

THE FLEET

The NCV fleet is divided into four distinct groups: the new Millennium ships (***Midnatsol, Finnmarken,*** and ***Trollfjord***), the Contemporary ships (***Kong Harald, Nordkapp, Nordlys, Nordnorge, Polarlys,*** and ***Richard With***), the Mid-generation ships (***Narvik*** and ***Vesteralen;*** although these are not usually marketed to Americans), and the remaining traditional ship (***Lofoton,*** which only cruises in the fall and winter). Traditional passenger cargo ships like the *Lofoton* used cranes and pallets to lift on the cargo. The newer ships roll on the cargo and vehicles through side doors, and these ships, despite their cargo task, approach cruise ship standards in the variety of public rooms and attractive decor offered. Their cabins remind one of Carnival's older ships—functional and plain. However, there is no organized entertainment, gambling, or hoopla. The newest Millennium ships are larger and even more cruise-ship-like than the 1990s generation of ships, offering more and more varied cabins (including a few suites with balconies) and 50% more deck space.

PASSENGER PROFILE

Coastal Voyage passengers making one-way or round-trip passages are generally 50 and up, as the trip is seen as a sedentary, scenic cruise. In summer, there will be some younger passengers. Germans are the most numerous nationality, followed by British, Norwegians, and other Scandinavians and Europeans. Some Americans book as part of a tour operator's package, but independent travelers will be aboard in the warmer months.

As the ships do provide basic transportation between ports, you'll find Norwegians aboard as deck passengers (on for the day or sleeping overnight in chairs or banquettes) or occupying a cabin for a night or two, and also lots of youthful backpackers during the summer holidays. The newer ships have conference facilities, and with oodles of available space in the off season, the Norwegian meetings market is growing.

Norwegian Coastal's Older Ships: A Retro Coastal Adventure

While most American passengers will book Norwegian Coastal's newer ships, there are other options.

Built in the early 1960s, the very traditional *Lofoten* is reminiscent of old steamships, and has been declared a Norwegian national landmark. Taking less than 200 passengers, it offers the atmosphere of a small, intimate country hotel with traditional wood-paneled walls. Most passengers who book this ship have little or no interest in the larger cruise-style ships, preferring these ships' old seagoing feel. Watching the cargo being lifted by crane into the ships' holds is like stepping back into a Humphrey Bogart movie. But this ship only sails October through March.

The 4,200-ton mid-generation ships *Narvik* and *Vesteralen* take 325 passengers in functional cabins with private facilities. These three ships have an attractive dome-style lounge on the top deck and a small forward observation lounge, plus a dining room, a cafeteria, and a small shop.

Norwegian Coastal Voyage Fleet Itineraries

Ship	Home Ports & Season	Itinerary*
ENTIRE FLEET	Between Bergen and Kirkenes (most ships year-round)	**5- and 6-day:** 35 coastal ports northbound, 34 coastal ports southbound, with shore excursions offered at Geiranger, Trondheim, Ornes, Tromso, Honningsvag, and Kirkenes on northbound; at Honingsvag, Tromso, Harstad, Svolvaer, Trondheim, and Kristiansand, southbound; **12-day round-trip:** Visits the same 34–35 ports

**The northbound voyage has much better timing for the most interesting ports such as Alesund, Bodo, Trondheim, Tromso, and Honnigsvag (for the North Cape). Passengers may join or alight at any port. The ships are most heavily booked May to August.*

Announcements are kept to a minimum, but are repeated in five or six languages, with English always one of the languages. In the high season, there's a courier aboard to handle shore excursions and passenger information, and he or she will likely speak many languages. On shore excursions, English-speaking passengers get an English-speaking guide but may be assigned to a bus with another group, meaning you may have to hear the tour in English and French, or English and Italian.

DINING

The food is geared to Norwegian and European tastes and is prepared and presented in a straightforward manner. Breakfast and lunch are buffets, and dinner is served by the young Norwegian wait staff. There are two sittings when the complement is large enough, and tables are assigned at embarkation according to language.

Breakfast includes fruits, cereals, cold meats and cheese, various breads and toast, and often boiled or fried eggs and bacon or sausage. **Lunch** is the best meal, with several hot entrees, soup, salad fixings, cold meats, herring served about a half-dozen ways, and cakes and pies. **Dinner** is a set (there is no menu selection) three-course meal with soup, main course (often fish, chicken, or veal), and dessert. You can head forward to the bar for free coffee service after dinner (at other times if you want a cup of java between meals you have to buy it at the cafeteria). **Special diets** can be catered to with advance notice. After a week aboard, the food may become somewhat monotonous, but it has improved with the coming of the new ships and the need to attract cruise-type passengers. And you can enjoy red, yellow, and sometimes black caviar at nearly every meal (a bonus for caviar lovers).

As this is a domestic service, and taxes on alcohol are high, you can expect to pay a minimum of about $6 for a bottle of beer and $25 for wine. Some passengers bring their own supplies but, of course, they are not permitted to bring them into the dining room.

All the ships have cafes, mainly catering to the shorter port-to-port passenger, and if you get hungry between meals you have to pay to get snacks here. Three full restaurant meals a day are included for the full one-way or round-trippers.

ACTIVITIES

The main activity while under way is viewing the passing scenery. The ships stop in their 34 or 35 ports at all hours of the day and night—at which point

Tips Prime Time Cruising

The best time to make the Norwegian Coastal Voyage is just before the middle of May, when you have 24 hours of daylight, fewer crowds, and lower fares. The only drawback may be snow still blocking the road to the North Cape.

passengers flock ashore for a walk or to buy newspapers and souvenirs—and if you take the complete 12-day round-trip you'll eventually visit all the ports at a convenient hour. Calls may be as short as 15 minutes or as long as a few hours. There is a package of reasonably priced shore excursions that provide a worthwhile way to see some of interior Norway and several fjords by bus. They are booked through the onboard courier or in advance as a package (which we suggest you buy).

There are no activities offered otherwise—you have to be self-motivated, playing a game of cards or reading. There is e-mail access at Internet Cafes on board the Millennium category ships only.

CHILDREN'S PROGRAM

Children come aboard with families making short hauls but generally not for the longer voyages. There's a video arcade, as well as a small, unstaffed children's playroom with a ball jump and climbing apparatus. Kids also get a 25% discount on shore excursions.

ENTERTAINMENT

In the summer season, there may be a band and dancing on selected evenings, but it's hit or miss. The Arctic Circle crossing ceremony is great fun if you enjoy being baptized with ice water, and the 180-degree turn in the tight Trollfjord basin amidst cascading waterfalls is also diverting.

SERVICE

The crew is all Norwegian (or at least people living in Norway), and ranges from long-time employees to recent recruits in their early 20s. On the smaller ships, service can be personal and friendly, but on the larger ones it is efficient and matter-of-fact. Tips are included in the cruise fare.

There is a laundry room with coin-operated washers and dryers (detergent is free).

Kong Harald • Nordkapp • Nordlys • Nordnorge • Polarlys • Richard With

The Verdict

These six similar (but not identical) ships are attractive, comfortable, and serviceable vessels providing a moderately priced, casual, low-key cruise.



Nordnorge *(photo: Norwegian Coastal Voyage)*

Specifications

Size (in tons)	11,200–12,000	Officers	Norwegian
Number of Cabins	230	Crew	60 (Norwegian)
Number of Outside Cabins	203	Passenger/Crew Ratio	8.2 to 1
Cabins with Verandas	None	Year Built	1993–1997
Number of Passengers	464–490	Last Major Refurbishment	N/A

Frommer's Ratings (Scale of 1–5)

Cabin Comfort & Amenities	3	Pool, Fitness & Spa Facilities	N/A
Ship Cleanliness & Maintenance	4	Children's Facilities	3
Public Comfort/Space	4	Decor	4

These are attractive, comfortable, and low-key ships, but curiously, for vessels that are marketed as sightseeing-intensive, they don't provide much incentive to spend time out on deck: Space there is limited and less cozy than aboard the older ships (when you're passing a major sight such as the narrow Trollfjord, it can seem downright crowded out on deck as people jockey for a view and photo op). On the plus side, though, these ships have cheerful and comfortable public rooms, lounge TVs, and lots of activities. Those seeking peace and quiet should sail in the shoulder season, when things aren't so busy on board. Bars tend to attract lots of smokers.

Cabins & Rates

Cabins	Brochure Rates*	Bathtub	Fridge	Hair Dryer	Sitting Area	TV
Inside	$720–$1,198	no	no	yes	no	no
Outside	$742–$2,227	no	no	yes	no	no
Suite	$1,154–$2,375	no	no	yes	yes	yes

**For 6-day cruise*

CABINS The cabins, mostly outside, are nearly all standardized and vary mostly by location. All are plainly furnished, with bunks that become bench-type sofas during the day, and many have an upper fold-away berth. The mattresses are foam and not particularly comfortable, but the addition of duvets is nice. There is sufficient stowage space, plus a small shower, basin, and toilet compartment. The lowest passenger deck cabins have portholes while the rest have windows, and some facing the lifeboats will have obstructed views. Outside cabins on Deck 6 overlook the promenade and can be peered into by joggers and those out for a stroll (keep your curtains drawn). Room service is limited to bed-making and cleaning.

PUBLIC AREAS The ships excel in Norwegian art, with specially commissioned sculpture and paintings depicting maritime scenes such as fishing boats, village life, and older coastal steamers in stormy seas. The furnishings feature

Value Some Special Deals

There are off-season rates. Various packages combine the cruise with transatlantic air on SAS, hotel stays, sightseeing, and the scenic train ride between Oslo and Bergen.

bold colors and patterns, and there are lots of shiny surfaces in steel, brass, and glass. These offer great appeal, especially during the long, dark Norwegian winters.

The forward observation lounge is the most popular daytime spot, with comfortable seating and wraparound windows. Getting a seat here in the high season can become a blood sport (you are asked not to reserve seats). Aft of this space is a large bar and lounge (which tends to attract a good number of smokers). On the restaurant deck, the main dining room is aft with wraparound windows, and is reached by a long starboard side galley lounge where you can catch the views from tall windows while sitting in comfortable leather chairs. Forward are an entertainment lounge and bar (again popular with smokers), a small library, and a conference room. Amidships are a 24-hour cafeteria, shops, and a game room for children.

With generally cool temperatures, deck space is limited to a large enclosed area aft on the highest deck, smaller afterdecks, and a wraparound, narrow promenade, some of the spaces offering deck chairs.

ALTERNATIVE DINING None.

POOL, FITNESS & SPA FACILITIES There's a small gym with a few machines (such as a treadmills and bikes), a bench press, and a weight machine. Each ship also has a sauna, but no pool. There's a wraparound promenade, which is nice for jogging and strolling.

Finnmarken • Midnatsol • Trollfjord

The Verdict

These modern vessels are more like cruise ships, boasting a variety of public rooms and more open deck space. The *Finnmarken* even has a swimming pool.



Trollfjord *(photo: Norwegian Coastal Voyage)*

Specifications

Size (in tons)	15,000	Officers	Norwegian
Number of Cabins	283/304/304	Crew	75 (Norwegian)
Number of Outside Cabins	248/244/244	Passenger/Crew Ratio	4 to 1
Cabins with Verandas	14/5/5	Year Built	2002/2003/2002
Number of Passengers	643/674/674	Last Major Refurbishment	N/A

Frommer's Ratings (Scale of 1–5)

Cabin Comfort & Amenities	4	Pool, Fitness & Spa Facilities	4
Ship Cleanliness & Maintenance	4	Children's Facilities	3
Public Comfort/Space	4	Decor	5

These new ships accommodate 600-plus passengers with significantly more deck space and more passenger cabins than the older ships. Plus, they add more suites,

a few with balconies and (on the *Finnmarken* only) Jacuzzis. To accommodate Americans, no doubt, there are TVs in some cabins (all cabins on *Finnmarken*). But the Norwegian tradition is not forgotten—the ships are virtually floating art galleries showcasing Norwegian paintings, sculptures and textiles. The *Trollfjord* and *Midnatsol* are sister ships. The *Finnmarken* is similar but with fewer cabins—the additional public facilities take up the extra space.

Cabins & Rates

Cabins	Brochure Rates*	Bathtub	Fridge	Hair Dryer	Sitting Area	TV
Inside	$720–$1,198	no	no	yes	no	yes
Outside	$742–2,227	no	no	yes	no	yes**
Suite	$1,306–$3,378	yes**	no	yes	yes	yes

**For 6-day cruise*
***On* Finnmarken *only*

CABINS The majority of cabins are outside. On the *Midnatsol* and *Trollfjord,* there are 19 suites and junior suites with queen-size beds, a few with balconies. The *Finnmarken* has 32 suites, some with balconies and Jacuzzis. There are special cabins for the physically-challenged. All cabins have telephones, and all cabins on the *Finnmarken* and suites and inside cabins on the *Midnatsol* and *Trollfjord* come with TVs. Cabin decor is a little more upscale than the older ships, with more variety of larger cabins (although space in most is still fairly tight). Some low deck cabins have portholes, and some outside cabins have obstructed views. A lot of the cabins have an upper berth for a third passenger.

PUBLIC AREAS Like on the older ships, Norwegian art forms a big part of the decor on these new vessels. Works by noted Norwegian artist Kaare Espolin Johnson, which were removed from the *Harald Jarl* when it was retired from service, were installed in the *Trollfjord* in a small salon on Deck 8. Furnishings are modern Norwegian on the *Midnatsol* and *Trollfjord* and use local wood and stone. Since passengers come to Norway for the views, the ships boast lots of windows and even glass elevators.

The *Trollfjord* has a winter theme (lots of blues and greens), and the *Midnatsol* a Midnight Sun (reds and yellows) decor. Both have a two-story panoramic lounge on their two upper decks (a favorite spot for viewing scenery) and a top deck with saunas, a gym, and a bar. The *Finnmarken* is done up in an Art Nouveau style reminiscent of the first Coastal Voyage vessels. Twelve Norwegian artists were commissioned to create paintings and sculptures for the vessel.

The main restaurants on all these ships would not be out of place on a megaship, and each vessel also has a playroom, shops, cafes, and a variety of bars and lounges. These ships also have Internet Cafes and libraries, and the *Finnmarken* even has a wine bar and outdoor cafe. An auditorium-like conference facility on *Trollfjord* and *Midnatsol* is used for groups.

ALTERNATIVE DINING None.

POOL, FITNESS & SPA FACILITIES These ships have small fitness rooms and saunas (with windows on the *Trollfjord* and *Midnatsol* so you don't miss any views) as well as large sun decks. The *Finnmarken* also has a massage area and outdoor swimming pool, as well as a hair salon. There are no jogging areas.

4 Royal Olympia

SHIPS IN EUROPE Odysseus • World Renaissance • Olympia Countess • Olympia Explorer • Olympia Voyager • Triton

850 Third Ave., New York, NY 10022-7513. ✆ **800/872-6400** or 212/688-7555. Fax 212/688-2304. www.royalolympiacruises.com.

These casual, friendly, and affordable ships offer a Greek-flavored cruise like no other line out there.

The Royal Olympia midsize vessels focus on the destination as much as the shipboard experience. Passengers typically want to see as much of the islands as they can in 3, 4, or 7 days, so most of the itineraries are pretty jam-packed, some including visits to as many as two ports a day.

The line's European-based ships fall into two categories, old and low-key (*Odysseus, Olympia Countess, World Renaissance, Stella Solaris,* and *Triton*), and small versions of modern megaships (*Olympia Explorer* and *Olympia Voyager*). All are staffed by very professional crews. For their size, the older ships offer a good variety of public rooms, although they can at times (particularly in midsummer) feel crowded. For the most part, decor is modern, bright, and cheery, with contemporary Greek artwork and an overall European ambience, in an older setting. Unfortunately, due to recent financial turmoil at the line, upkeep has not been what it should be, and you may see some signs of wear and tear. The newer vessels have a variety of entertainment options, activities, and cabin choices. These new ships are also really fast, able to cruise at 28 knots, which allows them to do itineraries that can go farther afield and beyond the norm.

As with other lines in this category, the international crowd aboard means announcements are made in many languages, which can get a bit monotonous.

Pros

- **Great service.** Dining room and cabin service are delivered with a friendly, personal touch.
- **Well-organized and diversified shore excursions.** It's clear this line knows the Greek Isles.
- **Good variety of public rooms.** These ships have their fair share of quiet nooks and crannies.
- **They're fast.** The *Olympia Explorer* and *Olympia Voyager* are among the speediest ships afloat.

Compared with other European lines, here's how Royal Olympia rates:

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Outstanding
Enjoyment Factor				✓	
Dining				✓	
Activities				✓	
Children's Program		✓			
Entertainment		✓			
Service					✓
Overall Value				✓	

Cons

- **The older ships show their wrinkles.** While the crews work diligently to keep everything clean and polished, evidence of deterioration cannot be camouflaged.
- **Small gyms and spas.** Not many facilities for workout-o-holics.
- **A lack of TVs and verandas.** On the older ships, there are no verandas, and TVs can only be found in top suites.

THE FLEET

Royal Olympia's fleet includes five older, classic vessels, all built between 1953 and 1976. There are also two new ships: ***Olympia Explorer,*** which debuted in 2002; and ***Olympia Voyager,*** which debuted in 2000. ***Stella Solaris,*** in service since 1953, is a classic ocean liner. It is undergoing an extensive renovation, and will not return to service until a World Cruise slated to begin in November 2004. The ***Olympia Countess*** and ***Triton*** are more sleek and contemporary. The ***World Renaissance*** and ***Odysseus*** (both of which joined the fleet in 1998) are comfortable older vessels, but not classic. The cruise line and ships with the Olympia names, by the way, were previously called Olympic (as in *Olympic Voyager, Olympic Explorer,* and *Olympic Countess*) but the names were changed in deference to the 2004 Olympics in Athens.

PASSENGER PROFILE

The cruises are affordably priced, and unlike some of the other European lines, attract about 60% Americans plus 40% Europeans and others (including Australians and Japanese). Most tend to be seasoned travelers with an intellectual interest in the places they are visiting. But these ships, with their affordable rates, are also suitable for first-timers and families. And they also attract groups (Fran cruised on the *World Renaissance* when it was about 50% filled with French doctors and their spouses). The age range is across-the-board, with most in their 40s on up. Younger travelers looking for energetic nightlife may be disappointed. For the most part, passengers tend to go to bed rather early, saving their energy for exploring the ports. There's rarely more than a handful of people in the midnight disco. The *Stella Solaris* gets the oldest crowd, with many in the over-55 category. The *Olympia Explorer* and *Olympia Voyager* were designed to attract a younger crowd, which they do to some success. Activities for children and teens are offered on the ships based on need (if there are enough kids booked, the line will put a youth counselor on board).

DINING

No one ever goes hungry on these ships and the quality and presentation of the **Greek cuisine,** featured as specials on the Continental menu, really stand out.

Warning **Buyer Beware!**

At press time, First European appeared to be in some financial turmoil. The Mistral and European Stars were arrested after French energy company Alstom, a financier of the ships, said it was owed money by the cruise line. Passengers saw their cruises interrupted. European Vision was still operating, however, and talks between officials of the cruise line and Alstom were ongoing.

Athens Olympics

Three Royal Olympia ships—the *Olympia Voyager, Olympia Explorer,* and *Olympia Countess*—will serve as floating housing for families of Olympic participants and visitors during the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens. They will be docked at the pier in Piraeus, the Port of Athens. Prior to and following the games, the ships will operate their regular itineraries.

Offerings include *tash kebab* (chunks of tender beef simmered with tomatoes and herbs served with rice pilaf), *sfyrida all spetsiota* (baked sea bass in tomatoes with potatoes), and *spanakopita* (spinach pie).

Dinner is served in two seatings, and menus also offer three Continental entrees, plus **vegetarian dishes, spa cuisine** (low cholesterol, reduced salt), and Pacific Rim cuisine (dishes with the flavor and spices of Asia). Following the entree are a choice of four desserts (including homemade baklava) plus a sugar-free dessert and an assortment of domestic and international cheeses and fresh fruit.

Passengers can eat breakfast and lunch in either the dining room or on the Lido Deck. Those who choose the dining room have the option of a buffet breakfast and/or ordering from a breakfast menu, while the Lido offers an extensive buffet. Similarly, a full five-course lunch is served in the dining room, whereas the Lido has a choice of several wonderful salads, cold cuts and cheeses, sandwiches, several meat and fish dishes, and various desserts. While the food at the deck buffets is plentiful, getting a seat can be a problem, so your best bet is to get there early. The new ships offer both a poolside pasta bar and a casual grill and pizza bar.

The ships also offer afternoon tea either on deck or in a bar, snacks served at midnight, and very limited 24-hour room service.

ACTIVITIES

The ships offer pretty standard fare: exercise classes, dance lessons, deck sports (Ping-Pong and shuffleboard), arts and crafts classes, backgammon, bingo, and bridge.

What sets the line apart are its special enrichment programs, most prevalent on longer sailings. Royal Olympia boasts of having hosted more Pulitzer Prize–winning authors as guest lecturers than any other line, as well as specialists in various fields including astronomers, archaeologists, historians, and ambassadors.

On all Greek Isles sailings, a licensed guide offers lectures on the ports, as well as on topics such as archaeology, architecture, art, and mythology.

All the ships have a saltwater swimming pool (in some cases two), small gym, spa, and beauty parlor. Unlike the vast majority of lines, who employ the London-based Steiner to run and staff their spas, the Royal Olympia spa and beauty treatments program is run by a Greek company, and they are very reasonably priced. Each ship in the fleet also offers expansive deck space for taking in the Greek sun, and the *Olympia Countess* offers tennis and a golf-driving range as well.

CHILDREN'S PROGRAM

There are small, barebones children's playrooms on the *Olympia Countess, Olympia Explorer,* and *Olympia Voyager.* A low-key children's program is operated whenever 10 or more children are aboard. Programming is dependent on the amount of free time spent aboard ship—most Royal Olympia itineraries are

Royal Olympia Fleet Itineraries

Ship	Home Ports & Season	Itinerary
Odysseus	**7-day W. Med,** Genoa (Italy) (May–Sept)	**7-day W. Med:** Port calls include Marseille (France), Ibiza, Montril, Barcelona, and Malaga (Spain), Tangier (Morocco), and Gibraltar (U.K.)
Olympia Countess	**3- to 4-day Greek Isles,** round-trip from Piraeus/Athens (Greece) (Mar–Nov)	**3- to 4-day Greek Isles:** Port calls may include Mykonos, Rhodes, Patmos, Santorini (Greece), Heraklion (Crete), and Kusadasi (Turkey)
Olympia Explorer	**7-day E. Med,** round-trip from Venice (Italy) (Apr–Oct)	**7-day E. Med:** Port calls include Corfu, Katakolon, Piraeus/Athens, Mykonos, and Santorini (Greece), Dubrovnik (Croatia), and Istanbul (Turkey)
Olympia Voyager	**7-day Med,** Genoa (Italy) (Apr–Oct)	**7-day Med:** Port calls include Nice (France), Civitavecchia/Rome and Messina (Italy), Santorini, Mykonos, Piraeus/Athens, and Patmos (Greece), and Kusadasi (Turkey)
Triton*	**10-day Norway,** Amsterdam (The Netherlands) (June–Sept); **10-day Baltics,** Masterdam (Netherlands) (May–Aug)	**10-day Norway:** Port calls may include Amsterdam (The Netherlands), Cuxhaven (Germany), and Bergen, Hellesylt, Geiranger, Trondheim, Olden, Flaam, Gudvangen, and Stavanger (Norway); **10-day Baltics:** Port calls may include Amsterdam (The Netherlands), Gdansk (Poland), St. Petersburg (Russia), Helsinki (Finland), Stockholm (Sweden), and Copenhagen (Denmark)
World Renaissance	**7-day Greek Isles,** Piraeus/Athens (Greece) (Mar–Nov)	**7-day Greek Isles:** Port calls include Istanbul and Kusadasi (Turkey), Mykonos, Patmos, Rhodes, Heraklion, and Santorini (Greece)

**Also does Black Sea and Greece and Egypt itineraries*

destination-intensive, so there's not a lot of downtime that needs filling up—and may include children's movies, pizza parties, pool games, disco dancing, magic tricks, and breakfast with the captain and his officers on the bridge.

Babysitting is not officially offered, but it can be arranged privately with onboard staff.

ENTERTAINMENT

The song and dance team tries its best to perform light cabaret shows on the dance floors of the main lounges. Headliners might include old Motown acts or magicians. Each ship also has a disco, but don't expect too much action there.

By far, the most popular and exciting entertainment event is **Greek Night,** when the crew joins in with each ship's resident Greek musicians and other entertainers to create a lively party atmosphere. Guests are encouraged to wear blue and white (the colors of the Greek flag), and festivities begin at sunset with an ouzo party accompanied by bouzouki music, followed by a dinner featuring a five-course, all-Greek meal. The evening culminates with a gala celebration of Greek music and dance in the show lounge, with passengers invited to come on stage at the end of the show to join the crew and performers in some lively Greek folk dancing.

Nightly dancing in the show lounge is another popular activity, and many sailings feature gentlemen hosts (to dance with single ladies).

SERVICE

While many cruise lines have a rapid turnover in personnel, some of the crew on these ships have been with the company for years (especially on the *Stella Solaris*). It's not uncommon to see them greet repeat passengers like old friends—a greeting the passengers return in kind. Service aboard the ships is warm and very good; Fran had a doting female cabin steward on one ship who was downright grandmotherly. The waiters take pride in their job and are very attentive to individual passenger requests. They also tend to have a great sense of humor, making mealtime a pleasure all around.

The ships do not have self-service laundry or dry cleaning, but do offer laundry and pressing services.

The crew pools tips, with a recommended contribution of $9 per person, per day.

Olympia Voyager • Olympia Explorer

The Verdict

Stylish, souped-up, modern (if smallish) cruise ships for people who want to pair great, port-intensive itineraries and learning opportunities with a casual cruise experience.



Olympia Voyager *(photo: Royal Olympia)*

Specifications

Size (in tons)	25,000	Officers	Greek
Number of Cabins	418	Crew	360 (Int'l)
Number of Outside Cabins	292	Passenger/Crew Ratio	2.3 to 1
Cabins with Verandas		Year Launched	
Voyager	12	*Voyager*	2000
Explorer	24	*Explorer*	2002
Number of Passengers	836	Last Major Refurbishment	N/A

Frommer's Ratings (Scale of 1–5)

Cabin Comfort & Amenities	4	Pool, Fitness & Spa Facilities	2
Ship Cleanliness & Maintenance	5	Children's Facilities	N/A
Public Comfort/Space	4	Decor	4

The debut of *Voyager* in June 2000 signaled a new phase for Royal Olympia, which has been known for adventurous itineraries, excellent service, and wonderful enrichment programs—and also a fleet of older, creakier, second-hand ships. By contrast, *Voyager* and sister *Explorer,* which debuted in 2002 after many delays, are new, new, new, from their sleek, high-tech hull design and propulsion system to their bright, modern interiors, designed by the people behind many

Value Savings Alert

Royal Olympia offers special rates for kids sharing a cabin as third or fourth passengers.

of the beautiful rooms aboard Celebrity's ships. Additionally, it's obvious that the ships were designed with the North American market in mind—all ship signs are in English, which is also the language of choice on board. Even the ships' names on their bows are in English.

Voyager and *Explorer* are two of the fastest passenger ships currently sailing, able to reach nearly 30 knots, which makes them ideal for the far-flung itineraries in which the line specializes. On one of its first sailings, a short hop out of Athens into the Greek islands, *Voyager* hit 29.5 knots and passed three ships that had left the port of Piraeus hours ahead of it. These are speedy ships. The downside? When leaving port, expect some vibration in the stern.

Cabins & Rates

Cabins	Brochure Rates*	Bathtub	Fridge	Hair Dryer	Sitting Area	TV
Inside	$2,060–$2,365	no	yes	yes	no	yes
Outside	$2,530–$3,705	no	yes	yes	no	yes
Suite	$4,220–$4,720	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

**Port charges are not included and add an additional $175 to $200*

CABINS Call them "cruise ship modern," with the same smooth style found aboard many modern megaships. All are decorated in light woods countered by appealingly minimalist white walls hung with abstract paintings. Standard cabins, at about 140 square feet, are not huge but are well laid out and provide better style and more amenities than those aboard many comparably sized ships. They have huge floor-to-ceiling mirrors that make them seem airier than they really are, plus safes, TVs, and minifridges. In addition, they offer a good amount of well-designed storage space—essential on the long itineraries the ships sometimes follow—with nifty sliding shoe racks and sock bins. Bathrooms are smallish but smartly designed. Inside staterooms are comparable with standard outsides, sans natural light.

Voyager offers only 12 veranda cabins, which are designated as Deluxe Sky Suites and measure 258 square feet, plus a huge 117-square-foot balcony. Sixteen 215-square-foot Bay Window Suites offer a nice seating area in a bay window that allows views down the length of the ship and, owing to the ship's speed and the cabins' windy position toward the bow, are probably a better idea than balconies. Still, on *Explorer* they were replaced by 215-square-foot balcony cabins with 50-square-foot verandas. All suites have a sitting area, a teensy bathtub (knees up!), and great modern art. Deluxe Sky Suites have a nice Japanese-looking lattice screen between the beds' "pillow area" and the windows.

Cabins in the stern on the Venus and Dionysius decks (Decks 3 and 4) get some vibration and noise when the ships get up to speed, but not more so than that on the average slower ship. On *Voyager,* the two aft-most cabins on Deck 3 are two-room affairs that are perfect for families; the second room, though without windows, has a convertible couch that sleeps two. *Explorer* has a similar pair of family cabins on Deck 2 forward.

There are no connecting cabins and no cabins specifically designated for single passengers. Four cabins are wheelchair accessible.

PUBLIC AREAS Up till now, Royal Olympia's fleet has consisted exclusively of old, classic-style ships, which generally were built to offer roomy public areas—a must when passengers were cooped up inside during cold Atlantic crossings. Perhaps it was this history that informed the design of *Voyager* and *Explorer,* which offer some startlingly spacious interiors considering the ships' overall smallish size. The central area of the main entertainment deck offers a nice, airy piano bar, two small shops, a card room, and a library (with three e-mail/Internet-enabled computer stations on *Explorer* only), all opening off a winding, open corridor that in some places has pillars rather than walls as the only boundary between it and the public rooms, adding to the open feeling. Stairs leading between decks have two inspiring Greece-themed poems adorning their walls.

A disco is perched on each ship's topmost deck, and is a fairly standard circular observation-lounge-by-day, tea-in-the-afternoon, club-by-night room, filled with small swiveling chairs that look like they should shoot up on little pistons when you sit in them, but don't. One level below is a single-level main lounge where small-scale revues and music and magic acts are staged. Each ship's casino is split into two small sections on each side of the small, two-level reception atrium, one side with about 40 slot machines and the other with four poker tables, roulette, and a bar. A comfortable Cigar Room rounds out the public room offerings, with great reclinerlike couches and a scattering of chairs mixed with a faux fireplace and incongruous modern art that nevertheless works well with the design. The small children's playroom is really a multipurpose room that's converted for kids only if more than 10 kids are on board.

ALTERNATIVE DINING None.

POOL, FITNESS & SPA FACILITIES These ships were not designed for hardcore sports and fitness folks. Their gyms are very small and not terribly pretty. Exercise equipment consists of two treadmills, one step machine, four weight machines (two in a separate, grim, windowless area), a small selection of free weights, and a sauna and Turkish bath. A small spa, where treatments include aqua-therapy, is located just next to the gym. A beauty salon sits on the port side of the gym/spa areas. There's a single small pool flanked by wading areas and showers. There's neither a jogging track nor any other location where you can get in a good walk.

Odysseus • World Renaissance

The Verdict

These are older ships, but they get the job done, transporting you to the Greek islands in friendly and comfortable surroundings.



Odysseus *(photo: Royal Olympia)*

Specifications

Size (in tons)		Officers	Greek
Odysseus	12,000	Crew	(Greek/Filipino)
World Renaissance	12,000	*Odysseus*	200
Number of Cabins		*World Renaissance*	235
Odysseus	224	Passenger/Crew Ratio	2 to 1
World Renaissance	243	Year Built	
Number of Outside Cabins		*Odysseus*	1962
Odysseus	183	*World Renaissance*	1966
World Renaissance	178	Last Major Refurbishment	
Cabins with Verandas	0	*Odysseus*	1998
Number of Passengers		*World Renaissance*	1997
Odysseus	400		
World Renaissance	457		

Frommer's Ratings (Scale of 1–5)

Cabin Comfort & Amenities	3	Pool, Fitness & Spa Facilities	2
Ship Cleanliness & Maintenance	3	Children's Facilities	N/A
Public Comfort/Space	3	Decor	3

These ships are friendly and relaxed, but not at all fancy. They do what they are supposed to do, providing passengers with a comfortable way to see as many islands as is humanly possible in a limited amount of time. The decor is tasteful, but the ships are still old-fashioned in a 1960s kind of way without being classic (maybe if you think of it as "retro" you'll be happiest).

Cabins & Rates

Cabins	Brochure Rates*	Bathtub	Fridge	Hair Dryer	Sitting Area	TV
Inside	$1,890–$2,105	no	no	no	no	no
Outside	$2,235–$3,385	no	no	no	some	no
Suite	$4,305	some	no	no	some	some

**Plus port charges of $175 to $200.*

CABINS Cabins on the *Odysseus* are on the small side (a superior is about 130 sq. ft.), while those on the *World Renaissance* are larger (about 165 sq. ft.). All cabins come with a writing area, phone, and four-channel radio. Some suites on each ship have sitting areas, bathtubs, double beds, and TVs. On the *Odysseus,* some cabins offer sofa beds, allowing you to tuck away your bed and have sitting space during the day. A handful of cabins on both are equipped with upper and lower bunks. There are no wheelchair-accessible cabins nor any cabins with verandas on either ship.

PUBLIC AREAS The ships both have an old-fashioned main show lounge with raised seating on the side and a dance floor in the center, that serves as the ship's hub (it's a gathering place for shore excursions and so forth). Both ships have various other bars and lounges, most on the same deck, as well as a cinema and a small casino. One of the more lively rooms is the Taverna bar on the *Odysseus,* a popular social venue that sometimes features Greek musicians.

Special attention seems to have been paid to the decor in the dining rooms, which are plush, bright, and pleasant, with nice fabrics, an intimate ambience, and glass-fronted wine display cases that make for a more upscale decor than that in the rest of the ships' public rooms. The other rooms are done up, in most cases, in cheerful colors, although the *World Renaissance* has some rooms, like the main show lounge, that are a tad dark.

ALTERNATIVE DINING None.

POOL, FITNESS & SPA FACILITIES The *Odysseus* has one outdoor pool and the *World Renaissance* has two; neither has a hot tub. The ships also have small gyms, saunas, beauty shops, and massage rooms.

Both ships have a good amount of deck space for sunning and lounging, although the pool areas can feel crowded at times, particularly when the buffet lunches are served. The *Odysseus* also has sheltered teak-deck promenade areas for walking, though there's no unobstructed wraparound deck.

Olympia Countess

The Verdict

This lovely ship, formerly owned by Cunard, is slightly more elegant and more modern than the others.



Olympia Countess *(photo: Royal Olympia)*

Specifications

Size (in tons)	18,000	Officers	Greek
Number of Cabins	423	Crew	350 (Greek/Int'l)
Number of Outside Cabins	281	Passenger/Crew Ratio	2 to 1
Cabins with Verandas	0	Year Built	1976
Number of Passengers	840	Last Major Refurbishment	1996

Frommer's Ratings (Scale of 1–5)

Cabin Comfort & Amenities	2	Pool, Fitness & Spa Facilities	3
Ship Cleanliness & Maintenance	3	Children's Facilities	2
Public Comfort/Space	3	Decor	3

The *Olympia Countess,* a sister ship to Mediterranean Shipping Cruise's *Rhapsody,* was built for Cunard, which was at the time trying to create an informal line to complement its traditional upscale cruises, a concept it later abandoned. The vessel later sailed in Indonesia as the *Awani Dream II* for now defunct Awani Dream Cruises. It's a nice, airy ship that has a more hotel-like feel than other Royal Olympia vessels, with a larger reception area, casino, and pleasant cinema.

Cabins & Rates

Cabins	Brochure Rates*	Bathtub	Fridge	Hair Dryer	Sitting Area	TV
Inside	$655–$750	no	no	no	no	no
Outside	$780–$1,130	no	no	no	no	no
Suite	$1,300–$1,465	yes	yes	no	yes	yes

**For three-day Greek Isles/Port charges are not included and add $55 to the cruise fare.*

CABINS Cabins are small but decorated attractively. Bathrooms are rather tight. The 58 deluxe suites average 215 square feet and have windows, tubs, sitting areas, and TVs. Superior cabins are tiny at 125 square feet. Some have double beds, and some cabins have sofa beds, allowing you to tuck away your bed and have sitting space during the day. There are connecting cabins for families, and a few with upper and lower bunks. Only the suites have safes and TVs. None of the cabins is wheelchair accessible.

PUBLIC AREAS This ship has a good-size, hotel-like reception area and a more modern feel than some of the other ships in the fleet. It's light and airy with lots of windows and a pleasant decor. Public rooms include a 487-seat restaurant, a main show lounge done up in tasteful fabrics (and featuring oval windows), and a large indoor/outdoor disco where the decor includes (bizarrely) suits of shining armor. Other public rooms include a casino, piano bar, tearoom, card room, and new and larger children's playroom (added in 1998).

ALTERNATIVE DINING None.

POOL, FITNESS & SPA FACILITIES While the *Countess* has no wraparound promenade, it does offer a good amount of open deck space, including two levels of decking surrounding the one swimming pool. There's also a kiddie pool, a hot tub, and even an outdoor practice tennis court, a rare find on a ship of this size.

The *Countess* has a larger gym than most of the other ships in the fleet and offers a dozen exercise machines. Two massage rooms are located nearby. The ship also has a small beauty salon.

Triton

The Verdict

The destination is the main objective on these cruises, not the ship, and the *Triton* does a decent job of offering a comfortable place to relax in between ports.



Triton *(photo: Royal Olympia)*

Specifications

Size (in tons)	14,000	Officers	Greek
Number of Cabins	353	Crew (Greek/Filipino)	315
Number of Outside Cabins	236	Passenger/Crew Ratio	2 to 1
Cabins with Verandas	0	Year Built	1971
Number of Passengers	620	Last Major Refurbishment	1992

Frommer's Ratings (Scale of 1–5)

Cabin Comfort & Amenities	2	Pool, Fitness & Spa Facilities	3
Ship Cleanliness & Maintenance	3	Children's Facilities	N/A
Public Comfort/Space	3	Decor	3

The ship was built by Cunard for informal cruising, and later sailed for Norwegian Cruise Line as the *Sunward II*. It joined Royal Olympia in 1992. The look is contemporary inside and out; the decor is bright and cheery. That said, the

ship can feel crowded. The standard cabins are particularly narrow, and there are no suites on this vessel, although there are some good-size deluxe cabins.

Cabins & Rates

Cabins	Brochure Rates*	Bathtub	Fridge	Hair Dryer	Sitting Area	TV
Inside	$2,700–$3,095	no	no	no	no	no
Outside	$3,310–$4,840	some	no	no	some	no
Suite	$5,500	yes	no	no	yes	yes

**For 10-day Norway/Port charges are not included and add an additional $250 to the cruise fare.*

CABINS The *Triton* has 26 suites, including 16 deluxe suites measuring 219 square feet each. Cabins on the Venus Deck have windows, while those on the Dionysos Deck have portholes. All cabins come with phones and radios, as well as writing desks, while some deluxe cabins have bathtubs, sitting areas, and picture windows. Some lower-end cabins have upper and lower bunks. There are no wheelchair-accessible cabins nor cabins with verandas.

PUBLIC AREAS Public rooms are located on the top four decks, with most cabins below. The dining room is light and bright, with a contemporary feel. The Nefeli Bar is located under a canopy on the top deck, next to the Nine Muses Nightclub, where panoramic windows also allow use as an observation lounge. One deck below is the Theatron cinema with theater seating, and the smallish Monte Carlo Casino.

ALTERNATIVE DINING None.

POOL, FITNESS & SPA FACILITIES There's a large oval-shaped swimming pool and a small fitness center. Wide teak decks around the pool and a wraparound promenade above offer ample deck space.

5 Swan Hellenic Cruises

SHIPS IN EUROPE Minerva II

U.S. Reservation Office, 631 Commack Rd., Ste. 1A, Commack, NY 11725. ✆ **877/219-4239.** Fax 631/858-1279. www.swanhellenic.com.

Swan Hellenic has always been in a class by itself, where mostly British passengers, and a minority of Americans, come aboard to be as active in mind and body as they are at home, sometimes more so.

The line offers one of the strongest, if not the best, enrichment programs on the high seas, with four or five top-notch lecturers giving talks aboard, dining with passengers, and accompanying them ashore. The non-repeating itineraries, usually lasting two weeks, attract a very loyal and generally well-educated British clientele for whom a standard cruise would never do. There is a Swan code of behavior, and good manners and a quiet approach to life reign throughout the ship. Local entertainment in port, two crew shows, evening cinema, and classical concerts are the extent of organized evening activities.

In 2003, Swan Hellenic swapped its much-beloved (and quite cozy) 344-passenger *Minerva* for a new vessel. The 600-passenger *Minerva II* (one of the former Renaissance R-series ships) is about double the size and offers far more amenities—alternative dining, plentiful balconies, and extra public rooms. But the atmosphere—that of a genteel, English country house hotel—has been preserved and the ship is still small enough to call at some of the more unusual ports that make its itineraries among the most interesting in the cruise industry.

Pros

- **Well thought-out itineraries.** They're destination-oriented, yet provide enough time at sea to introduce the lecture program and catch up on reading and napping.
- **One of the best libraries afloat.** Offers a large selection of fiction, nonfiction, travel guides, and other reference books, and there are plenty of cozy armchairs for reading.
- **An unrestrictive dining policy.** Meals are all open seating.
- **Low-key but friendly atmosphere.** The combination attracts a gregarious mix of passengers.
- **A more-inclusive cruise fare.** Gratuities, some flights to or from London, and some shore excursions are included in the cruise fare.

Compared with other European lines, here's how Swan Hellenic rates:

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Outstanding
Enjoyment Factor					✓
Dining				✓	
Activities					✓
Children's Program	N/A				
Entertainment			✓		
Service			✓		
Overall Value					✓

Cons

- **Service varies wildly.** This is particularly true in *Minerva II's* restaurants. Some waiters are friendly, others very matter of fact, perhaps the result of the gratuities being included in the fares.
- **It's best to play by the rules.** This is not a cruise geared for Americans who want to stick together as a group or who like to make lots of individual demands on the crew.
- **Most shore excursions are the usual motorcoach variety.** There's little geared to more active travelers. The best experiences, typically, occur when a tour is accompanied by one of the guest lecturers.

THE FLEET

The company has never operated more than a single oceangoing ship at any one time. ***Minerva II,*** built in 2001, represents a new era for Swan Hellenic, replacing *Minerva I.* Following company tradition, *Minerva II* was named by Dame Kiri Te Kanawa under London's Tower Bridge.

PASSENGER PROFILE

The passenger list is overwhelmingly British (something the line, which is now owned by Carnival Corporation, is hoping to change by attracting more Americans). There are a high percentage of repeat passengers on every voyage—often, the first questions asked will be "Have you cruised with Swan before?" The age range is 55 and up, with many passengers in their 70s and 80s, but they tend to be as active in mind and spirit as those 20 years younger. There are a good number of single men and women traveling alone or with a friend, and that's partly because of Swan Hellenic's commitment to offering solo-traveler cabins at fair rates. Most are well educated, and if not possessing university degrees or higher, then they are keenly interested in the cruise destinations. Swan Hellenic has snob appeal, and many of its patrons would never go on a standard cruise. American guests will likely be Anglophiles, at least to some extent. Everything aboard ship and ashore operates to military precision, and the passengers like it that way. Children are not part of the scene.

DINING

Minerva II's greatest dining strength is the variety of restaurants and its all-open-seating policy. The main dining room is open for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, and menus offer Continental choices along with British favorites, ranging from shepherd's pie to bubble-and-squeak. The Grill, one of the most popular restaurants on-board, features steakhouse fare in a more intimate setting. And adjacent is The Swan, the ship's Italian restaurant (where the made-to-order pasta dishes were stand-outs). Finally, The Bridge serves buffet fare for breakfast and lunch and, at dinnertime, replicates the menu from the main dining room. At night, white linen tablecloths and subtle lighting create a remarkably romantic atmosphere. An outdoor, partly-shaded deck adjacent is a great place for alfresco dining.

Value **Some Special Deals**

Besides the typical advance booking discounts, offers include discounts for combining two cruises and a program of standby fares and half-price fares for passengers under 18 when sailing with two full-fare adults.

Swan Hellenic Fleet Itineraries

Ship	Home Ports & Season	Itinerary
Minerva II	**13-day Greece and Turkey,** Piraeus/Athens (Greece) (May)*; **13-day E. Med,** Istanbul, Venice (Italy) (June)*/**; **13-day Italy and Greece,** Naples (Italy) (Sept)*; **13-day Spain and Portugal,** Barcelona (Spain) (July)*; **15-day Italy/W. Med,** Venice (Italy) (July)*; **15-day Norway,** London (U.K.) (Aug); **15-day Baltics,** Copenhagen (Denmark) (Aug)*; **15-day W. Med,** London (U.K.) (Sept); **15-day British Isles,** London (U.K.) (Sept)	**13-day Greece and Turkey:** Port calls include Nauplion, Monemvasia, Heraklion, Santorini, Delos, Patmos, Kos, and Rhodes (Greece), and Antalya, Bodrum, and Kusadasi (Turkey); **13-day E. Med:** Port calls may include Canakkale, Dikilli, and Kusadasi (Turkey), Chios, Delos, Itea, Nauplion, Rhodes, Heraklion, Katakolon, Gythion, Corfu, and Piraeus/Athens (Greece), Dubrovnik, Korcula, and Split (Croatia)**; 13-day Italy and Greece:** Port calls include Catania and Brindisi (Italy), Dubrovnik (Croatia), Corfu, Pylos, Mykonos, Piraeus/Athens, and Santorini (Greece), and Kusadasi, Dikili, and Canakkale (Turkey); **13-day Spain and Portugal:** Port calls include Valencia, Motril/Grenada, Cadiz, Gijon, and Funchal (Spain), Gibraltar (U.K.), Lisbon and Viana do Castelo (Portugal), and Guernsey (England); **15-day Italy/W. Med:** Port calls include Ravenna, Brindisi, Catania, Palermo, Naples, Elba, Livorno, and Civitavecchia/Rome (Italy), Dubrovnik (Croatia), and Nice (France); **15-day Norway:** Port calls include Bergen, Hellesylt, Geiranger, Trondheim, Lofoten Islands, Honningsvag, Tromso, Aalesund, Gudvangen, and Flaam (Norway); **15-day Baltics:** Port calls include Gdansk (Poland), Tallinn (Estonia), St. Petersburg (Russia), Helsinki and Turku (Finland), Stockholm and Karlskrona (Sweden), and Lubeck (Germany); **15-day W. Med:** Port calls include Guernsey (England), Bilbao, La Coruna, Cadiz, Malaga, and Mahon (Spain), Oporto and Lisbon (Portugal), Corsica (France), and Alghero (Italy); **15-day British Isles:** Port calls include Guernsey and Barrow-in-Furness (England), Dublin (Ireland), Rothesay, Tobermory, Loch Ewe, Kirkwall, Scrabster, Lerwick, Invergordon, and Leith/Edinburgh (Scotland)

** Plus a 2-night hotel stay **Can also join ship for a shorter, 6- to 8-day cruise*
The ship also does Black Sea, Morocco, and Middle East itineraries that include Mediterranean ports.

The food is not as important to Swan passengers as on comparably priced ships catering to the American market. There is a nice balance between British and Continental menus, with themed Scottish or Indian dinners.

At **dinner,** there are generally three appetizers, two soups, one salad, three main courses plus a **vegetarian selection,** and three desserts plus a good selection of cheeses, fresh fruit, and a savory (like a pickled fish or brandied fruit). The chef has the flexibility to buy fresh produce locally, hence there is no set rotation for the menus, and as often as possible, local dishes are prepared.

Catering to upscale but not necessarily risk-taking British passengers, the menus include entrees such as roast sirloin of beef, steamed tuna, grilled swordfish, loin of venison, and guinea fowl casserole. Salads at dinner are less varied than on a ship catering to Americans.

Lunch and dinner in the Bridge Cafe generally have a pared-down menu of what is available in the main dining room. The salad selections and desserts are more extensive, especially at lunch. **Breakfast,** oddly, rarely varies and on a long cruise the same-old-same-old offerings begin to bore the taste buds. Still, what's offered are the usual range of hot and cold selections, plus cold meats and cheeses for European tastes, and freshly prepared omelets. The croissants are fresh and light.

Wines, mostly from Europe, are moderately priced, and many passengers who regularly drink wine with dinner choose the French red or Italian white house wines priced at $12 a bottle. Bottles are marked with cabin numbers for those who wish to save the remains for the next evening. However, wine servers (they don't call them stewards) on *Minerva II* were oddly uneducated about the wine list and typically offered quite lackadaisical service—your wine might not arrive before dessert.

ACTIVITIES

Lectures are an integral part of all Swan cruises, and there are usually four or five lecturers aboard covering subjects appropriate to the destination, such as archaeology, anthropology, architecture, history, politics, and religion. Most are men and women who hail from British universities, but there may also be a newspaper columnist on gardens, an ornithologist from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, a wine expert, and a priest or bishop from the Anglican church. Names and brief biographies are listed in the brochure. Talks are formal presentations scheduled twice in the morning or afternoon on sea days. They are very well attended and last no more than 40 minutes, with questions taken after the talk. Guest speakers are expected to be available for the shore excursions, and may actually lead some tours in countries where it's allowed—which is a highlight for most passengers. A program of complimentary shore excursions is included for every port. Advance sign-up is required though we found the shore excursions staffers to be very flexible about last minute changes. Most are half-day adventures, allowing passengers to return to the ship for the midday meal. There are typically a handful of shore excursions that charge a fee; usually these involve a meal and an all-day outing.

Swan prides itself on organization and the high quality of the tours, deservedly so.

The card room is popular for bridge games, and an instructor is aboard for some cruises. The large library may be considered a major activity center for reading, researching, and sharing in the ubiquitous puzzle with usually three completed each cruise. *Minerva II's* spa is cozy but well-equipped as is the fitness facility. Yoga and aerobics were offered on varying days. There's an occasional film offered in The Lounge.

Interestingly, there is rarely entertainment around the pool area (unless you count lectures that are piped in over the loud speaker). Because most passengers are more interested in lectures than sun tanning, this area was rarely overcongested. Other activities include Ping-Pong, shuffleboard, and golf net. There is also a fitness track that was more used for power-walking than jogging.

There are no bingo, horse racing, casino, or pool games, and no one seems to mind; in fact, many would object to their presence.

CHILDREN'S PROGRAM

Children are generally not part of the scene, and if aboard, they need to enjoy adult company.

ENTERTAINMENT

All entertainment, which is limited by design, takes place in the main forward lounge. In the evening, it's a popular place after dinner for coffee and liqueurs; there may also be dancing to a small band. Shows are limited to the Filipino and Indonesian crew performances and local folkloric groups in a few ports. Every night in the Wheeler Bar a pianist played popular tunes. Classical concerts may be a feature on several evenings.

SERVICE

Cabin service is good if brisk. Coffee and tea is available in higher-category cabins. There is a charge for room service. A passenger launderette is very well-equipped and includes irons and ironing boards. There is no charge to use the washers and dryers and soap is provided.

The ship carries a British doctor and there is no charge for consultations. Tips are included in the cruise fare.

Minerva II

The Verdict

The *Minerva II* offers a high standard of comfort in an English country hotel setting for serious destination cruising.



Minerva II *(photo: Swan Hellenic)*

Specifications

Size	30,277	Officers	British/European
Number of Cabins	362	Crew	200
Number of Outside Cabins	317	Passenger/Crew Ratio	2 to 1
Cabins with Verandas	242	Year Built	2001
Number of Passengers	600	Last Major Refurbishment	2003

Frommer's Ratings (Scale of 1–5)

Cabin Comfort & Amenities	4	Pool, Fitness & Spa Facilities	4
Ship Cleanliness & Maintenance	5	Children's Facilities	N/A
Public Comfort/Space	5	Decor	5

Swan Hellenic's approach is to create an English country house hotel environment. And indeed, Minerva II feels like a hotel that floats—a base for exploring.

Minerva II offers more choices than the previous *Minerva I.* In public rooms, for instance, passengers can sip a cocktail in The Wheeler Bar (a Swan Hellenic tradition that travels from vessel to vessel) or in the beautifully refurbished top-deck Orpheus Room. The library, always first-rate on Swan Hellenic, is even

more of a destination than before, with hand painted murals and a faux fireplace, not to mention a breathtaking array of tomes, newspapers, and reference books. The standard of staterooms has also been raised. One of the biggest advantages to this new ship for Swan Hellenic is the plethora of balcony cabins.

This is a cruise line that designs its voyages quite obviously for the British market. Prices on bar menus and in gift shops are in pounds, for instance. Americans are tolerated (by staff and crew) but should be prepared for a service ethic that is not quite as warm and fuzzy as they might expect. At the same time, we've never met a more congenial group of passengers—most in the 50-plus age bracket—and the simple art of good conversation was a hallmark of our experience.

Cabins & Rates

Cabins	Brochure Rates*	Bathtub	Fridge	Hair Dryer	Sitting Area	TV
Inside	$4,244–$4,344	no	no	yes	no	yes
Outside	$5,045–$5,546	no	no	yes	yes	yes
Balcony	$5,946–$6,767	no	no	yes	yes	yes
Suite	$7,568–$10,350	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

**Rates are based on a 15-day Istanbul to Venice cruise and include air between London and the ship, transfers, a program of shore excursions, and tips to personnel aboard and on trips ashore.*

CABINS *Minerva II* offers a wide range of accommodations, from standard inside and outside staterooms to veranda cabins and suites. One of the biggest draws for this new ship is its high percentage of balconies—73% of outside staterooms have them. Standard outside cabins (with or without balconies) measure at a relatively generous 214 square feet; inside cabins are 162 square feet.

Cabins are comfortably equipped with a vanity/writing desk, loveseat, television with channels ranging from BBC World News to movies (mostly British), direct-dial telephone, binoculars, and hair dryers. Bathrooms in all cabins except suites are shower-only. Verandas are equipped with two plastic armchairs and a small table.

There are two different styles of suites. The Masters' Suite measures 781 square feet and features separate living and sleeping areas, and a dining table. Bathrooms are equipped with whirlpool tubs. The Owners' Suite, at a minimum 911 square feet, offers the same amenities—with a little bit more space. Both come with mini-fridge, CD player, and separate dressing areas.

PUBLIC AREAS The public rooms are extensive and spacious, decorated like an English country house. For indoor activities, rooms are located on Deck 5, including the Dining Room and its adjacent bar and shops. Also located here are the lovely Wheeler Bar with its clubby, cozy atmosphere, and The Lounge, the ship's main showroom, which hosts everything from the daily lectures to dance performances.

Up on Deck 10 are the other main public rooms—such as the Orpheus Bar, where bands play for passengers to dance at night. The Internet facility is tucked into a corner of the Orpheus. The Library is also located on Deck 10 as are the alternative restaurants, The Swan and The Grill.

Deck space is more than adequate with a wraparound promenade, and covered deck aft. Shaded sections are limited and the outdoor pool area is set up for drinks and meals in good weather.

ALTERNATIVE DINING With the new ship come two alternative eateries. The Swan serves Mediterranean-influenced fare—the made-to-order pasta is divine and the cheese course wonderfully varied. For carnivores, The Grill serves up steaks and chops. Reservations are required though we had little trouble getting a table even at the last minute.

POOL, FITNESS & SPA FACILITIES The outdoor swimming pool is surrounded by a Lido area and features two adjoining whirlpools, which, ironically, got more use than the pool itself. The fitness center has the usual range of equipment and also offers workout classes (usually one or two) every day. Lovely and serene, the spa/beauty salon prices its services (from massages to facials) slightly below rates found on American ships.

There is a fitness track, one deck above the Lido area, for walking and jogging. On the Sun Deck there's shuffleboard and a golf net.

7

The Luxury & Ultra-Luxury Lines

These cruise lines are the top shelf, the best (and most expensive) of the best, catering to discerning travelers who want to be pampered with gourmet cuisine and fine wines and ensconced in spacious suites with marble bathrooms, down pillows, sitting areas, and walk-in closets. Caviar is served on silver trays and chilled champagne in crystal glasses. Elegant dining rooms are dressed in the finest linens, stemware, and china, and guests dress up on formal nights (there will be some passengers in tuxes and ball gowns—others in dark suits and cocktail dresses) and wear suits and ties or nice outfits on informal nights. (Exceptions to this are Windstar Cruises, which offer a more casual kind of luxury and a more laid-back decor; and SeaDream Yacht Club, where the ultra-luxurious atmosphere requires no more than casually elegant attire.)

Exquisite French, Italian, American, and Asian cuisine on these ships rivals that of the best shoreside restaurants and is served in high style by doting, gracious waiters. A full dinner can even be served to you in your cabin, if you like.

Entertainment and organized activities are more limited as guests tend to amuse themselves, and enjoy cocktails and conversation in a piano bar more than they would flamboyant Vegas-style shows.

Ship capacity ranges from 110 on SeaDream ships to 2,620 on the *Queen Mary 2*. All are big on service, with almost as many staff as passengers. You're not likely to feel lost in the crowd, and staff will get to know your likes and dislikes early on. The onboard atmosphere is much like that of a private club, with guests trading traveling tales and meeting for cocktails or dinner.

Although the high-end lines are discounting more than ever, they still can cost twice as much as your typical mainstream cruise. Besides early-booking discounts, many high-end lines give discounts to repeat cruisers and those booking back-to-back cruises, and sometimes offer two-for-one deals and free airfare. Many extras are often included in the cruise fares (see chart below).

Most people attracted to these types of cruises are sophisticated, wealthy, and used to the finer things in life. While many are well traveled, they've most likely not done overly adventurous or exotic traveling, sticking instead to the five-star kind.

These ships are not geared to children, but a few (Crystal's *Symphony* and *Serenity* and Cunard's *Queen Elizabeth 2* and *Queen Mary 2*) have children's play centers. Every so often kids show up on the other ships, and babysitting can sometimes be arranged privately with an off-duty crew member.

DRESS CODES On Seabourn, Silversea, Cunard, and Crystal, bring the tux and the gown—guests dress for dinner on the 2 or 3 formal nights on these cruises. Informal nights generally call for suits and ties for men and fancy dresses

or pantsuits for ladies. Sports jackets for men and casual dresses or pantsuits for women are the norm on casual nights. Windstar espouses a "no jackets required" policy during the entire cruise, so men, bring nothing but dress slacks, chinos, and nice collared shirts (short or long sleeves); for women, casual dresses and slacks are fine for evenings. Casual elegance is also espoused on SeaDream, although most men wear jackets (without ties) at night. Radisson Seven Seas is somewhere in between, so bring the suit and nice dresses, but no need to lug the tux or fancy full-length gown on board if it's not your style.

Cruise Lines Reviewed in this Chapter

- Crystal Cruises
- Cunard Line
- Radisson Seven Seas Cruises
- Seabourn Cruise Line
- SeaDream Yacht Club
- Silversea Cruises
- Windstar Cruises

Freebies for the Ultra-Luxury Set

It's a fact: The ultra-luxury ships treat passengers like royalty. The following is a sampling of what they offer their guests on a complimentary basis (or at least what they've already figured into their cruise rates).

Tips: Seabourn, Radisson Seven Seas, Silversea, SeaDream

All Booze: Seabourn, Silversea, SeaDream

Wine with Lunch & Dinner: Seabourn, Radisson Seven Seas (dinner only), Silversea, SeaDream

Free Stocked Minibar: Crystal (top suites only), Cunard (top suites only), Seabourn (upon request), Radisson Seven Seas, Silversea, SeaDream

Unlimited Soda Water/Mineral Water: Seabourn, Radisson Seven Seas, Silversea, SeaDream

Some Shore Excursions: Seabourn, Silversea

Transatlantic Airfare: Cunard (one-way with transatlantic cruises)

Watersports: Seabourn, SeaDream, Radisson Seven Seas (*Diamond* only), Windstar

1 Crystal Cruises

SHIPS IN EUROPE Crystal Symphony • Crystal Serenity

2049 Century Park E., Ste. 1400, Los Angeles, CA 90067. ✆ **800/446-6620** or 310/785-9300. Fax 310/785-3891. www.crystalcruises.com.

Fine-tuned and fashionable (some may say glitzy), Crystal's dream ships offer pampering service and scrumptious cuisine on ships large enough to offer lots of outdoor deck space, generous fitness facilities, four restaurants, and over half a dozen bars and entertainment venues.

Crystal has three of the largest truly upscale ships in the industry, the newest, the 1,080-passenger *Crystal Serenity,* having joined the fleet last summer (2003). The *Serenity* is one of the line's Europe representatives this year, along with the slightly smaller *Crystal Symphony.* (The other ship, the oldest, is the *Crystal Harmony,* which will spend the summer in Alaska.) None of these ships is huge, by prevailing industry standards. But they're big enough to offer much more than their high-end peers. You won't feel hemmed in, and you likely won't be twiddling your thumbs. Service is excellent, and the cuisine, which includes Asian fare, is very good and close to par with that of Seabourn, Seven Seas, and Silversea. Crystal's California ethic tends to keep things mingly and chatty. Passengers are social and active, and like dressing for dinner and being seen.

Pros

- **Four restaurants.** There are two alternative restaurants as well as a formal dining room and a casual Lido restaurant. Several years ago, Crystal affiliated itself with Valentino, a fabulous Los Angeles restaurant, to create the menus for Prego, the onboard Italian eatery. And on the *Serenity,* the Asian restaurant has an impressive consultant, celebrity restaurateur Nobuyuki "Nobu" Matsuhisa.
- **Fitness choices.** No need to sit around and simply be pampered all day long if you'd rather work out. Each ship has a nice-size gym, a paddle-tennis court, shuffleboard, Ping-Pong, an uninterrupted jogging circuit, golf-driving nets, and a putting green.
- **Computer learning.** The ships have extensive computer labs, each with over 20 stations, complimentary training classes during sea days, and e-mail.

Compared with other Luxury lines, here's how Crystal Cruises rates:

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Outstanding
Enjoyment Factor					✓
Dining					✓
Activities					✓
Children's Program					✓
Entertainment					✓
Service				✓	
Overall Value					✓

Cons

- **Formality.** If you're not nuts about dressing up nearly every night (at least a jacket and tie for the men, chic cocktail dresses or pantsuits for the ladies), think twice about a Crystal cruise. Some passengers even get gussied up during the day.
- **Rigid dining schedule.** Like most biggish ships, the Crystal duo in Europe has two seatings at dinner, locking passengers into 6:30 or 8:30pm appointments in the main dining room.
- **Glitz.** Staid East-Coasters may find these ships a little, well, California-ish.

THE FLEET

Crystal's fleet comprises two nearly identical 960-passenger ships and the slightly larger ***Crystal Serenity.*** The *Crystal Harmony,* built in 1990, weighs 49,400 tons and cruises in Alaska as well as the Caribbean/Panama Canal, South America, and the South Pacific. (Pressed to choose his favorite ship on the seas, Jerry would opt for *Crystal Harmony.*) The ***Crystal Symphony*** was built in 1995 and is slightly bigger (at 51,044 tons), with a larger atrium and some expanded public rooms. One thing the company did, unfortunately, which prevents Jerry from offering the *Symphony* the same high degree of affection as he does its fleet mate, is to reduce the size of the Palm Court, which, on *Crystal Harmony,* he considers to be the prettiest public room afloat. In addition to spending May through November in the Mediterranean and Europe, *Crystal Symphony* does Panama Canal, South America, and Canada/New England cruises. The *Serenity* debuted last year in Mediterranean service, followed by Caribbean cruises, and became the company's representative on a 106-day World Cruise.

PASSENGER PROFILE

Few other cruise lines attract as loyal a crop of repeat passengers, many of whom hail from affluent areas of California and most of whom step aboard for a second, third, or fourth cruise with a definite sense of how they want to spend their time on board. There's commonly a small contingent of passengers from Japan, Australia, Europe, and South America who make up about 10% to 15% of the passenger mix. Most passengers are well-heeled couples, stylish but not particularly flamboyant, and over 55. A good number of passengers "step up" to Crystal from lines like Princess and Holland America.

Many Crystal passengers place great emphasis on the social scene before, during, and after mealtimes, and many enjoy dressing up (sometimes way up) for dinner and adorning themselves with the biggest and best diamonds they own. You'll see no shortage of big rocks and gold Rolexes. On formal nights (at least 3 per 10- or 11-day cruise) virtually all the men opt to wear dinner jackets or tuxes while their ladies don floor-length gowns or your basic, and always

Crystal Facts

Crystal Cruises is the North American spin-off of Japan's largest container shipping enterprises, Nippon Yusen Kaisa (NYK). Based in Tokyo, NYK is responsible for hauling large quantities of raw materials and finished goods around the Pacific. Despite its parentage, a passenger aboard Crystal could conceivably spend an entire week at sea and not even be aware that the ship is Japanese owned, built, and funded—but one hint might be the excellent Asian cuisine found on board.

acceptable, black cocktail dress. Passengers tend to be well traveled, although not particularly adventurous. They're not likely to be candidates for shooting the Colorado River rapids or backpacking in the Himalayas.

The onboard jewelry and clothing boutiques do a brisk business, and it's obvious that women on board have devoted much care and attention to their wardrobes and accessories. Although, as on most ships, dress codes are much more relaxed during the day, after 6pm men are usually dressed as you'd expect conservative Fortune 500 board members would be. There may be 20 to 40 kids on board summer European sailings, traveling with their parents or grandparents (or both).

DINING

One of Crystal's best features is its diverse and high-quality cuisine. Its themed, reservations-only **alternative restaurants**—the Asian-themed Jade Garden on the *Symphony,* Silk Road on the *Serenity,* and Kyoto on the *Harmony;* and Prego, an Italian restaurant, on all three—are right up there with the best at sea. A $6 service fee is charged at these venues, a sum that covers gratuities and which, to its credit, Crystal has not raised since it was first imposed in the early days of the *Harmony.*

Overall, the main dining room menus aboard Crystal's ships reflect a light-textured, thoughtful, **California-style cuisine** with selections like roasted duck with apricot-sage stuffing served with a Grand Marnier orange sauce, broiled Black Angus sirloin steak, or seared sea scallops and jumbo shrimp served with a light lobster beurre blanc over a bed of pumpkin risotto. At lunch and dinner in the dining room there's a **low-fat selection,** such as broiled filet of Chilean sea bass served with steamed vegetables (with calories, fat, cholesterol, sodium, carbohydrates, and protein content listed), as well as an **entree salad**—like a mixed grill salad with grilled herb-marinated chicken breast, jumbo shrimp, and filet mignon. **Vegetarian** meals are available. In the Mediterranean, the chef will often feature more seafood and local specialties, like lamb.

In a homage to the California wine industry, Crystal offers one of the most sophisticated inventories of **California wines** on the high seas. Extensive **French wines** are also offered. Prices begin at as little as $18 a bottle, with many selections in the $20 to $60 range, going as high as $800. In the Mediterranean, Crystal usually tries to have more local wines in the inventory.

The main dining room on each ship is chic and stylish, with white Doric columns, high-backed chairs, and mirrored ceilings with lotus-flower lighting fixtures. Tables are not too close together, and there are more than 20 tables for two, mostly along the side or near the oceanview windows.

As on many ships of their size, dinner is served in **two seatings.** Lunches and breakfasts, however, are open seating in the dining room and the Lido buffet restaurant. Service by teams of ultra-professional, gracious European male waiters is excellent, and there seem to be more nattily attired staff than passengers. In the main dining room—and to a somewhat lesser degree in the alternative restaurants—table settings are lavish and include fine, heavy crystal and porcelain. Even in the Lido restaurant, waiters are at hand to serve you your salad from the buffet line, prepare your coffee, and then carry your tray to wherever you want to sit.

Themed luncheon buffets—Asian, Mediterranean, or a western barbecue, for instance—are excellent and are generously spread out at lunchtime by the pool and sometimes in the lobby/atrium, where the midnight buffet takes place.

No expense or effort is spared to produce elaborate food fests, with heaps of jumbo shrimp, homemade sushi, Greek salads, shish kebabs, and more.

If you don't want to stroll much farther than your deck chair or if you've slept through lunch, between 11am and 6pm daily you can order something from the **Trident Grill** on the Pool Deck and have a seat, in your bathing suit if you so desire, at the counter or head back to your deck chair. The Grill serves beef, chicken, and salmon burgers; pizza; tuna melts; hot dogs; fries; fruit; and a special of the day, like a Caesar salad and chicken wrap.

Yet another place for a snack or a specialty coffee on these ships is the Bistro, open from 9:30am to 11:30am for a late continental breakfast and then between 11:30am and 6pm for complimentary grazing at the buffet-style spread of cheeses, cold cuts, fruit, cookies, and pastries. For a few dollars, you can also sip an almond mocha, hazelnut latte, espresso, or fruit shake, or a glass of pinot grigio or a nice merlot.

For **afternoon tea,** there's the ultra-chic Palm Court on Lido Deck (Deck 11). There is, of course, **24-hour room service.** If you've booked one of the suites, your room-service attendant will be a white-gloved butler who will bring you nightly pre-dinner treats like shrimp cocktail and caviar.

ACTIVITIES

While not overwhelming, Crystal offers an interesting selection of activities. Count on several **enrichment lectures** throughout a cruise, such as a professor of European history or geography presenting lectures on the region, or a movie critic talking to guests about Hollywood and movies. Most speakers are not celebrities, but well-known personalities do occasionally show up on Crystal cruises. In the past, some notables have included TV patriarch Walter Cronkite, glitz-meister Judith Krantz, Hollywood gossip enthusiast Bill Harris, NBC news commentator Edwin Newman, biographer David McCullough, and maritime historian Bill Miller.

The innovative **Crystal Learning Institute** on these ships offers more than a dozen sign-up courses such as piano or guitar instruction, drawing workshops, Spanish lessons, Cleveland Clinic health talks, tai-chi, and more. They are often fully subscribed, a kind of an Elderhostel learning experience at sea.

Crystal will again offer its **Wine & Food Festival** program during a few of the sailings of both ships in Europe. On each of those cruises, a prominent wine expert conducts two complimentary tastings, and a guest chef from a well-known restaurant conducts a pair of cooking demonstrations for guests and then presents those very entrees at dinner that night. Guests can ask questions of and mingle with the experts.

Dancing lessons are often taught by guest teachers as well, popular when offered. Learn to swing, or do the rumba and merengue. Group lessons are complimentary, and sometimes private lessons can be arranged with the instructors for about $50 per hour per couple.

Crystal is also big on organizing **bridge and paddle-tennis competitions,** game-show–style contests, and trivia games. Other features include providing mid-afternoon dance music with the resident dance trio or quartet, serving tea to the accompaniment of a harpist or small chamber orchestra group, offering interesting arts and crafts like glass etching, and even presenting guest fashion shows. Commonly, a PGA-accredited golf pro sails, too, conducting complimentary **group golf lessons** several times per cruise (again, private lessons can be arranged for a fee).

Crystal Fleet Itineraries

Ship	Home Ports & Season	Itinerary
Crystal Symphony	**11- and 12-day Baltics,** Dover (England), Stockholm (Sweden), Rouen/Paris (France), and Copenhagen (Denmark) (May–July); **12-day Norway,** Dover (England) and Copenhagen (Denmark) (June); **11-day British Isles,** Dover (July, Aug); **9- to 12-day W. Med,** Lisbon (Portugal) and Civitavecchia/Rome (Italy) (May)	**12-day Baltics:** Port calls may include Warnemunde (Germany), Antwerp (Belgium), Visby and Goteborg (Sweden), St. Petersburg (Russia), Helsinki (Finland), Tallinn (Estonia), Oslo, Bergen, and Stavanger (Norway); **12-day Norway:** Port calls include Antwerp (Belgium), Stavanger, Flaam, Gudvangen, Tromso, Honningsvag, Trondheim, Hellesylt, and Geiranger (Norway); **11-day British Isles:** Port calls may include Guernsey (U.K.), Invergordon, Leith/Edinburgh, and Shetland Islands (Scotland), Dublin and Waterford (Ireland), and Honfleur (France); **9-day W. Med:** Port calls may include Gibraltar (U.K.), Barcelona, Malaga, Cadiz, and Palma (Spain), Monte Carlo (Monaco), Cannes (France), Lisbon (Portugal), and Portofino (Italy)
Crystal Serenity*	**12-day Med,** Southampton (England), Civitavecchia/Rome (Italy), Barcelona (Spain), Istanbul (Turkey), and Piraeus/Athens (Greece) (May–Oct); **11- and 12-day Greece and Italy,** Piraeus/Athens (Greece) and Civitavecchia/Rome (Italy) (May, June); **7- to 12-day E. Med,** Piraeus/Athens (Greece), Venice and Civitavecchia/Rome (Italy), and Istanbul (Turkey) (June, July, Sept)	**12-day Med:** Port calls may include Bordeaux, Cannes, Calvi, Villefrance, and St-Tropez (France), Monte Carlo (Monaco), Portimao (Portugal), Gibraltar (U.K.), Palma and Barcelona (Spain), Dubrovnik, Zadar, and Korcula (Croatia), Corfu, Thessaloniki, and Mykonos (Greece), Izmir and Kusadasi (Turkey), Livorno/Florence, Portofino, Venice, Sorrento, and Taormina (Italy); **11- and 12-day Greece and Italy:** Port calls may include Corfu, Rhodes, and Santorini (Greece), Split and Dubrovnik (Croatia), Venice, Ravenna, and Taormina (Italy); **7- to 12-day E. Med:** Port calls may include Thessaloniki, Mykonos, Corfu, Rhodes, Volos, and Santorini (Greece), Dubrovnik (Croatia), Izmir and Kusadasi (Turkey), and Sorrento and Taormina (Italy)

**Also does a Canary Islands itinerary*

Kudos to the line's **Computer University**—it's really something else. Each ship has a well-stocked computer lab with over 20 computer workstations. On cruises with at least 6 days at sea, complimentary classes are offered on topics like a basic introduction to using the computer, understanding the Internet and the Web, and how to buy a computer. Cruises with fewer sea days also offer guests the opportunity to learn about using e-mail. There's no other computer program at sea that's this extensive. On all cruises, e-mail access is readily available as well, so passengers can send and receive e-mails to a special personal address they're given when they get their cruise documents. All computer use is free of charge, though e-mail carries a steep fee of $1.25 per minute with a 10-minute minimum, and a $5 set-up fee; or you can alternatively send or receive e-mails via a shipboard account for $3 each, plus a $5 set-up fee (there has been some internal debate at Crystal about lowering the rates, but these prices were still in effect at press time).

CHILDREN'S PROGRAM

Crystal is a sophisticated cruise line that focuses its attention on adults. That said, each ship does have a small but bright **children's playroom,** and there may be as many as 20 to 40 kids on board summer European sailings. At times like this, **counselors** are on hand to supervise activities for several hours in the morning and in the afternoon (on a recent Easter-time cruise, 6 counselors were on board to supervise about 35 kids). **Babysitting** can be arranged privately through the concierge, but Crystal is not shy about pointing out that they do not offer a day-care service and that parents are responsible for well-behaved kids. Generally, though, you'll find few if any kids on board the majority of Crystal cruises.

ENTERTAINMENT

Shows in the rather plain Galaxy Lounge on each ship encompass everything from **classical concertos** by accomplished pianists to **comedy.** A troupe of spangle-covered, lip-synching dancers and a pair of lead singers are likely to do a **Vegas-style performance.** Because of a slightly larger stage and more recent vintage technical capability, the *Serenity* tends to produce shows that are a tad more adventurous. Overall, the onboard entertainment on both Europe ships is good, but certainly not the high point of the cruise. There sure are lots of options, though.

In addition to the Galaxy show lounge, which has a dance floor for use before and after shows, there are the **Starlite Club** on the *Symphony* and the Stardust Club on the *Serenity* for late night dancing, mostly disco-style. Nightly, a pianist performs in the dark, paneled, and romantic Avenue Saloon (our favorite room and, frankly, maybe the most inviting pub on the seven seas) playing popular show tunes and pop hits from "New York, New York" to "My Funny Valentine" before and after dinner. A few nights on each cruise the Avenue Saloon is the venue for **karaoke.** Next door, **cigar smokers** will enjoy the cozy and genteel Connoisseurs Club. A **movie theater** shows first-run movies several times a day, and cabin TVs feature a wonderfully varied and full menu of movies each day, listed in the daily schedules under categories such as comedy, classics, arts and documentaries, concerts, and regular first-run movies. It's one of the best TV systems at sea.

Gamblers will have no problem feeling at home in the roomy **casino,** which is supervised directly by Caesar's Palace Casinos at Sea.

SERVICE

Without a doubt, service is a high point of the Crystal cruise experience. Even the staff manning the information and concierge desks in the lobby are endlessly good-natured and very helpful—a rare find, indeed.

The dining room and restaurant staffs hail from Italy, Portugal, and other European countries, and have trained in the grand restaurants of Europe and North America; the pool attendant who brings you a fresh towel and a glass of lemonade, as well as the bartender mixing your martini, are likely to be Filipino; and the cabin stewardess who tidies your stateroom is likely to be

Value Savings for Kids

Children 11 and under pay 50% of the minimum fare when accompanied by two guests paying full fare.

from Scandinavia or some other European country like Hungary. Overall, the dining/bar staff is best, outshining the room stewardesses.

We might note the Crystal ships have both a small pool and a hot tub for their crew members (located at the bow of the ship on Deck 5). It pays to keep the crew happy!

In addition to laundry and dry cleaning services, self-serve laundry rooms are available.

Crystal Symphony

The Verdict

This gracious ship is small enough to feel intimate and personal, yet large enough for a whole range of entertainment, dining, and fitness diversions.



Crystal Symphony *(photo: Crystal Cruises)*

Specifications

Size (in tons)	51,044	Officers	Norwegian/ Japanese/Int'l
Number of Cabins	480	Crew	545 (Int'l)
Number of Outside Cabins	480	Passenger/Crew Ratio	1.7 to 1
Cabins with Verandas	276	Year Built	1995
Number of Passengers	960	Last Major Refurbishment	2000

Frommer's Rating (Scale of 1–5)

Cabin Comfort & Amenities	4	Pool, Fitness & Spa Facilities	4
Ship Cleanliness & Maintenance	4	Children's Facilities	3
Public Comfort/Space	5	Decor	4

Plush, streamlined, extravagantly comfortable, and not as overwhelmingly large as the megaships being launched by less glamorous lines, the *Crystal Symphony* competes with the hyper-upscale Seabourn vessels, although Crystal's ships are almost five times as large as Seabourn's, with a broader choice of onboard diversions and distractions.

The hub of this ship is the atrium. Impressive and stylish, and less overwhelming than aboard some of the larger mainstream ships, it's where you'll find the concierge, the information and shore excursion desk, the Crystal Cove lounge, the ships' chic shops, and the site of the much-awaited midnight buffets, which are presented with fanfare every evening.

Cabins & Rates

Cabins	Brochure Rates*	Bathtub	Fridge	Hair Dryer	Sitting Area	TV
Outside	$7,110–$13,000	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Suite	$16,420–$24,205	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

**Prices shown are for 11-day cruise*

CABINS The smallest cabins aboard the Symphony are 202 square feet, large enough to incorporate a sofa, coffee table, and desk. Outside staterooms with

verandas measure 246 square feet (including the veranda). Despite their high price tag, the majority of Crystal's cabins are smaller than the smallest aboard any of the Seabourn vessels (its smallest cabins measure 277 sq. ft.). Just over half the accommodations have small verandas, measuring about 6 feet by 8 feet. While drawer space is adequate, the hanging closets are smaller and tighter than you'd expect on ships of this caliber. Tiled bathrooms have double sinks and are smartly laid out.

Deck 10 holds the ships' spectacular, attractively styled penthouses; the two best measure nearly 1,000 square feet, including balconies. The other two categories are about 491 and 367 square feet, including balconies. All have walk-in closets and Jacuzzi bathtubs, and the penthouse suites and the Crystal Penthouses have bidets.

All of the *Symphony's* cabins are outside, more than half with verandas; those without have large rectangular windows. The E category cabins on Deck 8 have views obstructed by lifeboats.

Overall, color schemes are pastels—pinks, mints, blues, and beiges—accented by golden-brown wood tones. All cabins have a sitting area; bathtub and shower; TVs broadcasting CNN, ESPN, and other channels; VCR; minibar; hair dryer; and safe.

PUBLIC AREAS Throughout the ship, you'll notice craftsmanship, with marble features and brass, glass, and hardwood paneling mingling with flowers and potted plants (especially palms). Although the Palm Court on the *Symphony* is smaller and configured differently from the one on the *Harmony,* it's nevertheless a handsome room, with its comfy white rattan chairs and sofas, large windows, and natural greenery. In classic California style, the color schemes are light and airy, with lots of white and pale pastel furniture and walls.

Passenger throughways are wide and easy to navigate. The atrium/lobby area is a miniature, more subdued version of the glittery megaship atria, but still the most dazzling area of the ship.

Designed with curved walls and low, vaulted ceilings, the ship's main dining room is elegant and spacious and done up in light colors. The chunky silverware and heavy crystal glassware twinkle and shine and mirror a sophisticated land-based restaurant.

There are two large entertainment lounges, one for Vegas-style material and another for ballroom dancing to a live band (and disco dancing late at night).

The ship has a hushed, somewhat academically charming library that's outfitted with comfortable, upholstered chairs and a worthy collection of books, periodicals, and videos. There's also a large theater for movies and slide lectures.

The ship has six-plus bar/entertainment lounges as well as a roaming staff that wanders the public areas throughout the day and much of the night, offering to bring drinks to wherever you happen to be sitting. Polished mahogany, leather upholsteries, and a live pianist draw passengers into the dark Avenue Saloon. It's one of the prime before- and after-dinner cocktail spots (and Fran's personal favorite). The adjacent Connoisseurs Club (created in 1999 from a part of the Avenue Saloon) offers a similar ambience for cigar smokers and lovers of fine cognacs.

ALTERNATIVE DINING The Jade Garden and Prego alternative restaurants are located on the main entertainment deck (think dining as entertainment) and are interesting and colorful spaces. Meals in these venues—Asian and Italian, respectively—require reservations, and a $6 per person service fee is charged.

POOL, FITNESS & SPA FACILITIES The *Symphony* offers a lot of outdoor activities and spacious areas in which to do them. There are two outdoor swimming pools separated by a bar, ice-cream bar, and sandwich grill, as well as two hot tubs. One of the pools is refreshingly oversized, stretching almost 40 feet across one of the sun decks. The other has a swim-up bar and can be covered with a retractable glass roof. The gym and separate aerobics area are positioned for a view over the sea, and the adjacent Steiner-managed spa and beauty salon are sizable.

There's also a pair of golf driving nets, a putting green, a large paddle-tennis court, and Ping-Pong tables. Runners and walkers, *note:* Just under four laps equals 1 mile on the broad, uninterrupted teak Promenade Deck.

The ship's generous tiered afterdecks are gorgeous and provide quiet places for an afternoon spent dozing in a deck chair or for quiet repose leaning against the railing and allowing yourself to become entranced by the ship's wake.

Crystal Serenity

The Verdict

This ship is the largest in the fleet, but with a passenger space ratio of 63 compared to 51.4 and 53.1 for the earlier pair, the additional space allows expansion. While the *Serenity* has many big-ship amenities, there are also many intimate rooms.



Crystal Serenity *(photo: Crystal Cruises)*

Specifications

Size (in tons)	68,000	Officers	Norwegian/ Japanese/Int'l
Number of Cabins	548	Crew	635 (Int'l)
Number of Outside Cabins	548	Passenger/Crew Ratio	1.7 to 1
Cabins with Verandas	468	Year Built	2003
Number of Passengers	1,080	Last Major Refurbishment	N/A

Frommer's Rating (Scale of 1–5)

Cabin Comfort & Amenities	4	Pool, Fitness & Spa Facilities	5
Ship Cleanliness & Maintenance	4	Children's Facilities	3
Public Comfort/Space	5	Decor	4

Stylish and as comfortable as any ship could be, the *Crystal Serenity* competes most squarely with the newer Radisson ships in the range of venues and dining options. Food and service are on a par, but the lower cabin categories here are more modest in size.

The welcome aboard comes in the lovely, but not overwhelming, two-story atrium, comparable to a lobby of a fine hotel and topped with a dome of colored glass panels.

The lower level has the reception counter where there is seldom a wait, and the Crystal cruise consultant and the Crystal Society hostess are seated in a lounge section. The Crystal Cove offers a sit-up bar, lounge, and pianist or

player piano, depending on the time of day. The upper level is rimmed by high-end clothing, jewelry, and fine china shops, as well as The Bistro, a lounge bar with a light buffet featuring cold meats, salads, fruit, cheeses, and desserts.

Cabins & Rates

Cabins	Brochure Rates*	Bathtub	Fridge	Hair Dryer	Sitting Area	TV
Outside	$8,850–$15,195	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Suite	$19,190–$31,105	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

**Prices shown are for 12-day cruise*

CABINS All cabins are outside, and 85% have verandas. The cabins are also all bigger than on the earlier Crystal ships. The smallest cabins aboard the *Serenity* are 226 square feet, and large enough to incorporate a sitting area with a two-seat sofa, pop-up coffee/dining table, and desk. Staterooms with veranda measure 269 square feet. The verandas have the usual white plastic chairs (with green cushions) and white plastic table. Lounge-type deck chairs can be requested. Drawer space is adequate and improves with walk-in closets in the Penthouses with veranda (PH). All baths have double sinks, and the remote TV units have DVDs.

The 82 Penthouses with veranda measure 403 square feet; 32 Penthouse Suites with veranda measure 538 square feet; and the largest—the four Crystal Penthouses with veranda—are 1,345 square feet. Amenities in these cabins include butler service, flat-screen TVs, full-size bathtubs with Jacuzzi, separate stall showers, and complimentary wine, beer, and liquor set-up (the very top suites also have bidets).

None of the sight lines are obstructed by lifeboats, which are stowed below the cabin decks. The cabin color schemes vary from deep rich fabrics and dark paneling and cabinetry to beige walls and light tone carpets. All cabins have a sitting area; bathtub and shower; TVs broadcasting CNN, ESPN, and other channels; DVD; minibar; refrigerator; hair dryer; and deep security safe.

PUBLIC AREAS Quality in furnishings, fabrics, paneling, and decorative features are evident throughout the ship, while the multiplicity of public rooms allows for the intimate and clubby to the roomy and airy. The Palm Court on this ship is outstanding. In this spacious observation lounge, natural light floods into the room through 270-degree floor-to-ceiling windows. Six hexagonal skylights provide more sunlit settings for healthy-looking potted palms. The rattan furnishings arranged in cozy groupings on two levels nicely define the roomy setting—an ideal locale for the captain's welcome party, dancing after dark, and afternoon tea.

Everything is spacious—the expansive decks, the high-ceilinged corridors, and the widest open promenade at sea.

The main dining room is big but never noisy (and offers two seatings). For casual poolside dinners, Tastes has attractive table settings next to the Trident Pool and under the Magrodome (a removable dome), and lunchtime buffets are occasionally themed. Two entertainment lounges host large production shows, cabaret acts, and dancing, and a cozy third serves as the late-night disco. A moderate-size theater features enrichment lectures and films. The library, fitted with comfortable reading alcoves, has a good hardback collection and a selection of DVDs to sign out for in-cabin use.

The clubby Avenue Saloon and the neighboring Connoisseur's Club cigar bar compare favorably with those on the other ships in the fleet, which is to say, they're nice places to hang out.

ALTERNATIVE DINING Prego, the ship's Italian specialty restaurant, is a long room located aft on the starboard side, executed in white and gold with bas relief urns filled with fruit on the bulkhead pilasters. Decorative panels show Tuscan city scenes. Celebrity restaurateur Nobuyuki "Nobu" Matsuhisa consulted on the pan-Asian menu for the *Serenity's* Asian restaurant, the Silk Road. At the entrance, the Sushi Bar is a new offering for Crystal. As in other alternative locations in the Crystal fleet, the cover charge is $6 a head.

POOL, FITNESS & SPA FACILITIES The 8,500-square-foot spa and fitness centers, located high up and aft, are much larger than aboard the two previous ships. They have separate entrances and very good soundproofing, so the thumping of exercise machines does not intrude upon treatment room serenity or the Lido Cafe below. There are two pools, one under a Magrodome and the other outside and flanked by two hot tubs.

This ship has two paddle-tennis courts, and on a lower afterdeck, two golf driving nets, a putting green, and two Ping-Pong tables. For constitutional walkers and joggers, the uninterrupted teak Promenade Deck is a delight. Five tiered afterdecks provide quiet venues for reading, taking a nap, and watching the broad wake trail behind.

2 Cunard Line

SHIPS IN EUROPE Caronia • Queen Elizabeth 2 • Queen Mary 2 (preview)

6100 Blue Lagoon Dr., Ste. 400, Miami, FL 33126. ✆ **800/728-6273.** Fax 305/463-3010. www.cunard.com.

For a true transatlantic crossing, there is no competition. The two older ships in the fleet are lovingly looked-after treasures from the past and the brand new *Queen Mary 2,* which recently took over the regular transatlantic routes from the famous *Queen Elizabeth 2,* vows to be a treasure of the future.

In business since the mid–18th century and once the dominant British line on the north Atlantic, Cunard has had its ups and downs since the invention of the passenger aircraft, but in the past few years it has reemerged with its very classic, very British personality intact.

Interestingly, it may be the line's acquisition by the incredibly American Carnival Corporation (parent of Carnival Cruise Lines) that's responsible for this new focus on Cunard's core strengths. After the purchase, Cunard's fleet was trimmed, leaving two traditional ships, the *Caronia* (marketed almost exclusively to a British audience) and the *QE2.* Carnival put up big bucks ($780 million) to create the new mega ocean liner *Queen Mary 2,* the most expensive and biggest passenger ship ever built. The atmosphere on board the older ships is genteel and as formal as it gets today, and most passengers like it that way. Except on short cruises, or ones that fill up with deeply discounted fares, the passengers enjoy dressing up for dinner, creating an elegant atmosphere that lasts throughout the evening. The *QM2,* with all its bells and whistles, may attract a broader spectrum of passengers—and should certainly add some young blood to those transatlantic crossings, which on the *QE2* tended to attract an older crowd. Cunard officials are banking on it.

Pros

- **Cruising much the way the last well-heeled generation did.** The *QM2* is today the only ship sailing a full slate of transatlantic crossings part of the year while also operating a trimmed down regular cruise schedule.
- **Graceful oceanliner profiles.** All these ships turn heads. The older ships are handsome, not apartment blocks on a squared-off hull with a blunt bow. The *QM2* is massive, but still a real ocean liner.
- **Most passengers feel at home aboard ship.** The atmosphere is social because Cunard passengers enjoy life at sea where ports often play a secondary role.

Compared with the other Luxury lines, here's how Cunard rates:

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Outstanding
Enjoyment Factor					✓
Dining				✓	
Activities				✓	
Children's Program				✓	
Entertainment				✓	
Service			✓		
Overall Value				✓	

**Ratings do not take into account* Queen Mary 2, *which debuted after press time.*

Cons

- **The ships still operate on somewhat of a class system.** Passengers in higher category cabins enjoy more luxury. For example, only guests in the top suites get to eat in the renowned Queen's Grill on the *QE2* and *QM2.*
- **The older ships are not high-tech.** There are no multitiered show lounges on either the *Caronia* or *QE2.*
- **Deck space is limited on the *QE2.*** On "fun in the sun" cruises, the outer decks get crowded at midday.

THE FLEET

The ***Queen Mary 2*** is in transatlantic service much of the year, but in between does some cruises in other parts of the world including Europe and the Caribbean. The ***Queen Elizabeth 2,*** having been replaced by the *QM2* on transatlantic routes, now wanders the globe including Europe, with most cruises from Southampton. The ***Caronia*** is home ported for all Europe cruises in Southampton—the aim is to spur interest in the product among British customers, something that management feels will be easier to do with a ship based in England rather than with one that flits around the Med.

The *Caronia* and *QE2,* while both having a traditional ocean liner look about them, are quite different in size and layout.

The 70,327-ton *QE2* takes up to 1,791 passengers at speeds generally not exceeding 24 knots, though she can make over 30 knots if behind schedule. Built as a semi-two-class liner, she has a wide variety of public rooms tucked around the ship and has undergone many changes to keep her up-to-date.

The 24,492-ton *Caronia,* known as the *Vistafjord* until late 1999, takes only 668 passengers and is elegantly furnished like a fine British hotel, and is an easy ship on which to spend many sea days.

The 150,000-ton *QM2* carries 2,620 passengers and is billed as the largest, longest, tallest, widest, and grandest liner ever built. But the transatlantic ship is no lumbering elephant—it's also the fastest liner ever built and can sustain speeds of 30 knots.

PASSENGER PROFILE

The *Caronia's* well-heeled passengers have a simple profile that is older and hails mostly from Britain (where most of the marketing effort for this ship takes place). *Caronia* guests like traditional service and enjoy dressing up at night. The *Queen Elizabeth 2* gets a good number of British passengers especially on its cruises from England, although these cruises also appeal to Americans attracted by the ship's history.

Queen Mary 2 is expected to draw 50% American and 50% British passengers including baby boomers in their 40s and 50s attracted by names like celebrity chef Todd English (who will have a restaurant on board) and Canyon Ranch (which will operate the ship's spa). These boomers are expected to bring along their families, and the ship will have extensive children's facilities. Of course the ship will also attract those who just plain like transatlantic crossings, aka the former *QE2* crowd. While the *QE2* environment was very formal, however, the *Queen Mary's* will be slightly more relaxed, with 2 formal nights on transatlantic crossings instead of four.

DINING

Dining is formal on all the ships, though formal attire is not requested every night. However, 2 nights of a transatlantic crossing are designated formal and most passengers comply because they like it that way.

On the *Queen Elizabeth 2* there are **five restaurants** with reserved seating, including three grills—Queens, Princess, and Britannia—and two large dining rooms—Caronia and Mauretania, the latter with two sittings, as well as a Lido buffet area and a snack bar. The 231-seat Queens Grill is reserved for guests in top suites only and has its own kitchen, so preparation and presentation are of a higher standard. Passengers here can order items that aren't on the menu, and many do, especially game dishes such as pheasant or guinea fowl or a specially prepared rib roast of beef sliced tableside. Princess and Britannia Grill diners (again, the dining room is assigned based on the level of cabin you book) can also order items not appearing on the menu. Some regulars who book the highest cabin categories actually prefer to dine in one of these two grills rather than the larger, top-of-the ship Queens Grill.

The Caronia Restaurant was completely redesigned to resemble an elegant London hotel dining room. The grand space benefits from big side windows and some partitioning.

The lowest-priced cabin occupants eat in the Mauretania Restaurant, a very large, low-ceiling room where attractive etched-glass dividers create more intimate spaces. A two-sitting policy operates here, and the Continental menu is the same as for the Caronia Restaurant. Catering mostly to British and American passengers, the menu runs from excellent beef and veal dishes to daily changing salads, terrific fancy desserts, and a traditional cheese tray with lots of biscuits from which to choose.

The **casual dining** on the *QE2* takes place in a large and somewhat noisy Lido Restaurant, located aft and with a low ceiling. Avoid the peak-hour queues and try finding a table near one of the big side windows or facing aft. In heavy, pitching seas, this room rises and falls, especially all the way aft. The buffet layout is good with separate sections for the salad bar, pizza, dessert, and ice cream (lots of toppings). Coffee and tea are also available at all times. The Lido is open at night, when it is frequented more on a European cruise than on the North Atlantic because the latter attracts a traditional crowd who prefers the main restaurant.

On the *Caronia,* there is one formal, single-seating dining room with highly polished European service. The Continental menu, featuring heavier sauces to accompany the veal and game dishes than aboard the *QE2,* also caters to lighter tastes with salmon, Dover sole, and shellfish dishes. The informal Lido buffet aft is small and can be cramped for seating at lunchtime, with the spillover on a rainy day taking up residence in the adjacent ballroom. The selections are well prepared, but the variety is less because of the tight space. At night, Italian dining is available in the **alternative restaurant,** the festive reservations-recommended 40-seat Tivoli Restaurant (no fee is charged), an intimate space facing aft over the afterdeck and pool. The menu is a set one, and the careful preparation takes place in a separate kitchen.

The *Queen Mary 2* has 10 restaurants. As on the *QE2* there is the intimate Queens Grill, reserved for guests in the top suites, and the intimate Princess Grill reserved for those in junior suites. Most passengers, however, will dine in the opulent, Art Deco–inspired Britannia dining room, which features a sweeping entrance down a grand staircase. Alternative restaurants also abound on the *Queen Mary 2,* open to all guests on a reservations basis, with no extra cover charge. These include Todd English Restaurant, created by the renowned Mediterranean-inspired chef, located overlooking a pool. At night, the King

Court buffet area on Lido Deck is transformed into four eateries: La Piazza, an Italian trattoria; Lotus, serving sushi, sashimi, and satay; Chef's Galley, where cooking classes will also be offered; and The Carvery, featuring British roast meats. Those wanting casual dining at night can enjoy pub grub at the Golden Lion or burgers at the Boardwalk Grill. Afternoon tea is served daily in the Winter Garden. **Room service** is available 24/7. We can't tell you much about the cuisine as the ship had not launched at press time, but we do know that renowned chef Daniel Boulud was a culinary advisor, and all the food in the dining rooms will be served on Wedgewood china (with platinum and gold trim in the Grill rooms).

Vegetarian/spa choices are available on all the ships.

ACTIVITIES

On the *Queen Elizabeth 2* there is no shortage of daytime activities. The ship's well-received **lecture program** features a wide range of speakers, some well known and others just very good at what they do. They'll cover diverse topics such as an author's latest book (later made available for purchase and signing at the library), producing a movie, investing in the stock market, foreign affairs, and ocean liner history. The **Computer Learning Center** is terrific; classes are held regularly, and the facilities are available to all at other times. A staff member takes passengers on the ship's **Heritage Trail,** displaying Cunard's 160-year history in original oil paintings, trophies, and memorabilia, including a mesmerizing photo display of the famous passengers who have crossed on Cunard ships. Outdoors, facilities include a putting green, golf range, basketball, paddle tennis, deck tennis, shuffleboard, and both indoor and outdoor pools.

On the *Caronia,* there are fewer activities because of the ship's size, but it still carries on the tradition of a good **enrichment program,** especially focusing on the destinations and cooking demonstrations by the chefs. The card room is popular for bridge players and for board games, and a proper cinema screens films.

The *Queen Mary 2* will offer what sounds at least on paper like the most impressive roster of onboard activities at sea. A **cultural academy program,** operated by the University of Oxford, will feature classes in garden design, astronomy, and oceanography. Passengers will have the opportunity to participate in workshops and master classes with performers and directors from the **Royal Academy of Dramatic Art** in London—where the alums include Sir Anthony Hopkins, Peter O'Toole, Kenneth Branagh, and Ralph Fiennes (the Royal Academy will also contribute readings, one-act plays, and celebrity appearances).

And there will be lectures on things like the history of jazz and global issues, some featuring best-selling authors. Those who want to learn a little nautical history will be able to borrow headsets for a **Maritime Quest Exhibit,** a museum-quality, self-guided walking tour all over the ship to look at trivia and Cunard history on display. Outdoors there's basketball, a putting green, and the longest jogging track at sea, among other options.

Web junkies on all the ships can hook up to the Internet for 95¢ a minute.

CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS

The structure of the *Queen Elizabeth 2's* programs depends on how many children are booked. For the young ones, there's a large children's room-cum-nursery with tiny furniture, staffed throughout the day. It's located high up,

Cunard Fleet Itineraries

Ship	Home Ports & Season	Itinerary
Caronia	**7- to 10-day Spain and Portugal,** Southampton (U.K.) (Mar, May, June, Sept); **4-day France,** Southampton (U.K.) (Apr); **14-day Baltic,** Southampton (U.K.) (June, July); **18-day W. Med,** Southampton (U.K.) (Oct); **7-day British Isles,** Southampton (U.K.) (Sept); **10-day Norway,** Southampton (U.K.) (Aug)	**7- to 10-day Spain and Portugal:** Port calls may include Vigo, Cadiz, Gijon, La Coruna, and Santander (Spain), Gibraltar and St. Peter Port (U.K.), and Lisbon (Portugal); **4-day France:** Port calls include St. Peter Port (U.K.), Le Havre (France); **14-day Baltic:** Port calls may include Kiel and Warnemunde (Germany), Stockholm (Sweden), Helsinki (Finland), St. Petersburg (Russia), Tallinn (Estonia), Copenhagen (Denmark), and Amsterdam (Netherlands); **18-day W. Med:** Port calls include Cadiz and Palma (Spain), Valletta (Malta), Venice and Messina (Italy), Dubrovnik (Croatia), and Gibraltar (U.K.); **7-day British Isles:** Port calls include St. Peter Port (U.K.), Cork and Dublin (Ireland), and Greenock (Scotland); **10-day Norway:** Port calls include Molde, Hellesylt, Geiranger, Flaam, and Bergen (Norway)
Queen Elizabeth 2	**7- to 14-day Northern Europe/ Norway,** Southampton (U.K.) (May–Aug); **7-day British Isles,** Southampton (U.K.) (Aug)	**7- to 14-day Northern Europe/Norway:** Port calls may include Oslo, Flaam, Aalesund, Trondheim, Hellesylt, Geiranger, Skarsvag, Stavanger, and Bergen (Norway), Copenhagen (Denmark), South Queensferry (Scotland), Rostock and Hamburg (Germany), and Amsterdam and Rotterdam (Netherlands); **7-day British Isles:** Port calls include St. Peter Port and Liverpool (England), Dunmore East: (Ireland), and Cherbourg (France)
Queen Mary 2	**6-day Transatlantic** between New York and Southampton (year-round); **9- to 14-day W. Med,** Southampton (U.K.) or Piraeus/Athens (Greece) (May, Aug, Oct); **11-day Northern Europe,** Southampton (U.K.) (July)	**6-day Transatlantic:** Sail between New York and Southampton; **9- to 14-day W. Med:** Port calls may include Vigo, Palma, Barcelona, Malaga, and Cadiz (Spain), Gibraltar (U.K.), Marseille (France), Civitavecchia/Rome and Livorno (Italy), and Lisbon (Portugal); **11-day Northern Europe:** Port calls include S.S. Queensferry/Edinburgh (Scotland), Hellesylt, Geiranger, Alesund, and Bergen (Norway), Hamburg (Germany), and Rotterdam (Netherlands)

out of the way, and near the pet kennels. Young children may choose from a kid's menu and have an early supper. The *QE2* has a private room for teenagers called Club 2000, with video games, Foosball, and board games. The *Caronia* sees very few children and has no special programs. The *Queen Mary 2* expects to attract more kids than the other ships. In an "if we build it they will come" gesture, the designers have created a camplike **Play Zone,** an extensive area that rivals that on megaships in the Caribbean, and comes with its own splash pool, toys, activities, and computer terminals, as well as a staff of youth counselors. Toddlers, meanwhile, get the attention of British nannies.

ENTERTAINMENT

Compared to the newest large cruise ships, Cunard's *Queen Elizabeth 2* and *Caronia* do not offer lavish shows—there simply is not the room to stage them. The *Caronia* has a ballroom with only a slightly raised stage and the *QE2* uses the Grand Lounge, which has a slightly better setup for shows. Hence the evening entertainment runs towards **cabaret acts** such as singers, dancers, illusionists, and the like. However, both ships do offer ballroom dancing and provide dance lessons and male hosts. On the *QE2,* dancing takes place every night in the Queens Room to a large band, and on the *Caronia* on selected nights and before the after-dinner cabarets. In addition, the *Caronia* offers high-quality **after-dinner concerts** in the Garden Lounge. The *QE2's* Golden Lion Pub and Yacht Club each have bands, and a pianist plays the old *Queen Mary's* grand piano alternating with a harpist. The *QE2* has a large **cinema** with balcony; the *Caronia's* is smaller, and on one level.

The *Queen Mary 2* presents a different scene altogether. There's a multi-tiered, state-of-the-art theatre for **musical show productions** by a resident troupe of singers and dancers (they will do shows including one called *Rock at the Opera*), as well as a ballroom with the largest dance floor at sea, a cool dance club, and lounges for cabaret, karaoke, and the like. There will also be **plays and readings** presented by actors from London's Royal Academy of Dramatic Art. As on the *QE2,* you can expect pianists and harp players.

SERVICE

Cunard offers **24-hour cabin service,** on the *Queen Elizabeth 2* and *Caronia,* but sometimes you need to ask if you want a particular service (morning tea, ice at 6, leaving the curtains open at night so you can see the dawn, and so on), after which it's willingly performed. The dining staff may be a little harried in the two-sitting Mauretania Restaurant on the *QE2,* but excellent otherwise (though staff turnover may turn up a raw steward on occasion). The bad old days of inconsistent service are gone forever, hopefully, and the staff is friendlier and more willing than ever before. All the ships have laundry facilities and offer dry cleaning and pressing service. Service on the *Queen Mary 2* was not reviewed at press time.

Cunard has an unusual tipping policy, and suggested tipping is: on the *QE2,* $12 to $14 depending on in which restaurant you dine; on the *Caronia,* $7.50 per day; and on the *QM2,* $13 per day for Queens and Princess Grills guests and $11 for all other passengers.

Caronia

The Verdict

The *Caronia* provides a traditional, sophisticated, midsize ship experience, a rarity on the high seas today.



Caronia *(photo: Cunard)*

Specifications

Size (in tons)	24,492	Officers	British
Number of Cabins	372	Crew (mostly European)	379
Number of Outside Cabins	333	Passenger/Crew Ratio	1.7 to 1
Cabins with Verandas	25	Year Built	1973
Number of Passengers	668	Last Major Refurbishment	1999

Frommer's Ratings (Scale of 1–5)

Cabin Comfort & Amenities	4	Pool, Fitness & Spa Facilities	3
Ship Cleanliness & Maintenance	4	Children's Facilities	N/A
Public Comfort/Space	4	Decor	4

The *Caronia* came on the scene just as the transatlantic trade was drying up, and while she resembled her earlier sister *Sagafjord* (now *Sage Rose*), the *Caronia,* then called *Vistafjord,* never made regular Atlantic crossings. However, she is one of the last surviving ocean liner–style ships, with unmatched traditional elegance and grace. Her recent refit is wonderful news, ensuring that she will be around for some years to come, offering spacious European-style cruising to the high-end market.

Cabin & Rates

Cabins	Per diems from	Bathtub	Fridge	Hair Dryer	Sitting Area	TV
Inside	$1,699–$1,849	some	yes	yes	some	yes
Outside	$1,999–$5,459	some	yes	yes	some	yes
Suite	$6,929–$11,229	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

CABINS Eighty percent of the 372 cabins are outside, and all are designed for longer voyages, with spacious floor plans and plentiful stowage. The detailed cabin plans are well worth studying because of the intriguing variety of arrangements. All cabins have light wood accents, TVs with VCRs, two music channels, phones, safes, minibars, robes, fresh fruit daily, and bottles of sparkling wine upon embarkation. Many cabins on Promenade Deck overlook the open side deck, but some views are obstructed by lifeboats. Some cabins in the top categories have verandas, and two Hollywood-style duplex suites are among the nautical world's best, featuring glass-enclosed lounges with treadmills and indoor-outdoor hot tubs on upper levels and bedrooms with hot tubs below.

PUBLIC AREAS *Caronia's* public rooms are paragons of understated British hotel elegance, from the forward circular Garden Lounge for afternoon tea and concerts to the spacious ballroom for shows and dancing. Gentlemen hosts provide company on the dance floor for ladies traveling alone. Side galleries provide intimate spaces for a newly refitted bar (now a British-style pub), card room, mahogany-paneled library, and casino. The elegant dining room serves some of the best food afloat at one unhurried sitting. Passengers dress accordingly. Buffets are set up in the cafe and by the pool, and it's a bit cramped here on a fine day. Amidships is a cinema for first-run films and special-interest lectures, and the aft-facing nightclub doubles as a daytime retreat for readers, who revel in the views over the Veranda Deck pool.

ALTERNATIVE DINING Tivoli, a 40-seat restaurant with an all-Italian menu and wine list, is open for dinner on a reservations-recommended basis. It's popular, so book early.

POOL, FITNESS & SPA FACILITIES There is an outdoor pool aft and a second pool that lies deep within the hull in a complex that includes a gym and spa with aerobics, bikes, rowing machines, Stairmasters, sauna, steam bath, thalassotherapy, and massage facility. There is a wraparound deck for jogging and walking.

Queen Elizabeth 2

The Verdict

The *QE2,* famous for her years of transatlantic service, is still a fine grande dame for people who like nostalgia cruising.



Queen Elizabeth 2 *(photo: Cunard)*

Specifications

Size (in tons)	70,327	Officers	British
Number of Cabins	921	Crew	1,000 (Int'l)
Number of Outside Cabins	625	Passenger/Crew Ratio	1.79 to 1
Cabins with Verandas	33	Year Built	1969
Number of Passengers	1,791	Last Major Refurbishment	1999

Frommer's Ratings (Scale of 1–5)

Cabin Comfort & Amenities	3	Pool, Fitness & Spa Facilities	4
Ship Cleanliness & Maintenance	3	Children's Facilities	3
Public Comfort/Space	4	Decor	4

The *QE2* is a lovely reminder of the historic days of ocean travel (even though she's really only in her 30s). Since her re-engining and major subsequent refits, she has simply become better and better in food, service, decor, and amenities. No ship has had a greater capital investment and it shows.

Cabins & Rates

Cabins	Brochure Rates	Bathtub	Fridge	Hair Dryer	Sitting Area	TV
Inside	$1,429–$1,929	no	no	no	no	yes
Outside	$1,929–$7,279	some	some	some	some	yes
Suite	$9,279–$14,429	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

CABINS Being an older ship originally designed for two classes, the *QE2* has a huge range of cabin accommodations, and even layout and decorative variations within a single category. The high-up veranda cabins were added to the ship over the years, and they are located in a separate penthouse location, effectively cut off from the rest of the ship. The amidships Decks 1 and 2 Q3 Grades were the top accommodations when the ship was new, and they remain the preferred choice for traditionalists who want an authentic steamship cabin. They have wood paneling, a large elliptical window or three elliptical portholes, walk-in closets, and a large marble bathroom with full-size tub and bidet. On rough seas, these middle-of-the-ship cabins are preferred by those in the know.

The mid-priced Princess and Caronia Grade rooms are also roomy for this level, while the lowest-priced are deep in the ship and relatively tight, with many inside, including some with upper and lower berths. However, they provide moderately priced accommodations.

PUBLIC AREAS Nearly all the public rooms range over two complete decks (Upper and Quarter Decks) and offer a great variety of venues for socializing, reading, and special functions. Decor is both traditional and up-to-date. The Queens Room, with its tapered white columns, comes alive at a formal afternoon tea with music and again after dinner for ballroom dancing with several gentlemen hosts at the ready. The most attractive bar lounge is the Chart Room, a two-section space with a cozy interior and a pianist or harpist in attendance.

Passengers dining in the three grill rooms have exclusive access to the Queens Grill Lounge high on the Boat Deck for reading, tea, or drinks. In the afternoon and evening, the Golden Lion Pub attracts the beer set, who come for the small-band sounds, while the Yacht Club is the late-night venue where the officers and staff mingle with passengers. The theater, a two-level room with a balcony, offers films and special-interest talks. The oft-bustling library is a two-room complex with two professional librarians, 7,000 books, and ocean liner books, videos, and memorabilia for sale.

ALTERNATIVE DINING None.

POOL, FITNESS & SPA FACILITIES Steiner runs the spa and fitness facilities, which lie deep down in the hull, with the spa on Deck 6 and the gymnasium and indoor pool on Deck 7. The Spa offers a 10-station AquaSpa and treatment rooms, sauna, and massage. The gym positioned alongside the glassed-in pool has the typical machines, plus classes and daily hikes on deck. The outdoor pool is Deck 1 aft.

Preview: *Queen Mary 2*

At press time, the *Queen Mary 2,* the first new ocean liner in 25 years (since the 1969 completion of the *Queen Elizabeth 2*) was slated to debut. It's probably the most anticipated launch since the *Titanic.* All the bells and whistles are here including name brands like Wedgewood (for all the ship's china); renowned chef Todd English (with an onboard specialty restaurant); renowned chef Daniel Boulud (the ship's culinary consultant); Canyon Ranch (which operates the ship's spa); the University of Oxford (providing onboard classes); the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (offerings workshops, plays, and readings); and Veuve Clicquot (lending its name to the champagne bar).

The *QM2* has been designed as a floating palace—a really, really big floating palace. It is the largest passenger ship ever at 150,000 tons, 4 city blocks long, and taller than the Statue of Liberty.

Built at Alstom Chantiers de L'Atlantique in France, the ship from the outside looks like an ocean liner, with Cunard's red and black hull and red funnels. Inside, the decor honors the Art Deco style of its trans-atlantic liner predecessors, but in a modern interpretation. Think sweeping staircases, a grand ballroom (the largest dance floor at sea), and domed salons. Special rooms include the Commodore Club featuring live jazz and commanding views from wraparound windows at the bow of the ship.

The Royal Court Theatre, where musical productions are offered, boasts tiered seating and state-of-the-art acoustics, lighting, and sound systems. Passengers take tea in the Winter Garden, and gamble in the Empire Casino. The ship's disco, G32, features a construction motif (the name of the room is actually the job number used by the shipyard while the ship was under construction). Uniquely, the ship also has a full-scale planetarium (the room doubles as a venue for virtual reality rides, movies, and lectures).

Taking up the private balcony craze, 80% of the ship's cabins are oceanview and the majority have balconies. Standard cabins are 194 square feet and come with amenities including a computer dataport, interactive TV, cotton robes, and mini-fridges. Balcony cabins have a sitting area with a small sofa. The ship's junior suites, at 381 square feet, come with a free bottle of French champagne, larger balconies than on

the standard cabins, full-size sofas or sofa beds, bathtub/showers, Frette linens, personalized stationery, and pre-dinner canapés delivered to your room. Plus you get concierge service to book reservations for spa treatments, dinner, and more.

Queens Grill suite accommodations come with butler and concierge service, baths with whirlpools, walk-in closets, en-suite bars (fully stocked), fresh flowers, plus all of the above. The Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth suites have private elevator access, and can be combined to create a big house-size space of 4,000 square feet. Grand Duplex suites are a generous 2,249 square feet. All cabins and suites feature Canyon Ranch toiletries, and a Pillow Concierge (you can choose from nine types of pillows).

Alternative dining takes on a whole new level on the *QM2.* At night, guests can dine either in their assigned grill or dining room, or on the cuisine of celebrity chef Todd English at the Todd English Restaurant. Or choose from four additional sit-down venues (Italian, Asian/Sushi, carved meats, and chef's choice) in the ship's Lido buffet area. There is no charge for any of the venues, but reservations are recommended.

This ship may attract some passengers based solely on its spa. It is the only vessel featuring a Canyon Ranch SpaClub at sea. The 20,000-square-foot facility is located on two decks, with 24 treatment rooms, a big gym, a beauty parlor, and a staff of 50 health and wellness workers. Workshops focus on diet, healthy aging, and disease prevention, and exercise classes include Pilates, yoga, and t'ai chi. The spa has a thalassotherapy pool, neck fountains, herbal and Finnish saunas, a steam room, and more.

The *QM2* has five swimming pools including the Pavilion Pool with a retractable roof, and a splash pool for kids. The ship has the longest jogging track at sea (⅓-mile full circle), and acres of pool decks and open space. The ship's Sports Centre includes paddle tennis, a golf simulator, and a basketball court. Also a putting green, shuffleboard, Ping-Pong, and quoits (the classic British game).

Rates for 6-day transatlantic sailings range from $1,869 to $27,499, including one-way airfare across the Atlantic.

3 Radisson Seven Seas Cruises

SHIPS IN EUROPE Radisson Diamond • Radisson Seven Seas Voyager

600 Corporate Dr., Ste. 410, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33334. ✆ **800/333-3333** or 954/776-6123. Fax 954/722-6763. www.rssc.com.

Radisson Seven Seas Cruises offers one of the most sophisticated, nearly all-inclusive cruising styles afloat, and the line takes its destinations seriously, offering a strong enrichment program.

Cruising European waters with Radisson Seven Seas is sea travel at its best, a culturally rich experience shared with a couple hundred rather than a couple thousand fellow passengers. While the 354-passenger *Radisson Diamond* and 700-passenger *Seven Seas Voyager,* the line's ships in Europe, are quite different types of ships, they both include many features in the overall cruise price, reducing the number of nagging extra charges at the end of the cruise. The ships offer a wide variety of port-intensive itineraries in northern Europe and the Mediterranean.

At press time, there was discussion about changing the line's name to Seven Seas Cruises.

Pros

- **A nearly all-inclusive price.** Rates include gratuities, complimentary wines with dinner, complimentary soft drinks, and a stocked minibar.
- **No crowds aboard.** With just 354 passengers aboard the roomy *Radisson Diamond,* it's a low-key, relaxed cruising atmosphere. The *Voyager* is bigger but crowds are never a problem.
- **Terrific menus and alternative dining.** Both ships pride themselves on fine dining that reflects their destinations. They offer single-seating dining, as well as reservations-only alternative dining (an impressive two alternative restaurants on the *Voyager,* and at no extra charge).

Cons

- **Awkward public rooms on the *Radisson Diamond.*** The piano bar lacks windows, and the show lounge has poor sight lines beyond the first couple of rows.
- **Slow nightlife.** People on these cruises tend to go to bed right after the shows. Don't look for much late-night action.

Compared with other Luxury lines, here's how Radisson rates:

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Outstanding
Enjoyment Factor					✓
Dining					✓
Activities					✓
Children's Program			✓		
Entertainment			✓		
Service				✓	
Overall Value				✓	

THE FLEET

While the ***Voyager*** has a slightly older sibling, the *Mariner,* the other ships are each different in design, which confuses some prospective passengers. Nonetheless, the overall experience remains similar across the fleet. The 354-passenger ***Radisson Diamond*** is a futuristic, one-of-a-kind twin-hulled ship (like a huge catamaran) that's stable and especially roomy. It was originally designed for the incentive and conference markets; hence, the public rooms have a hotel feel and lack communion with the sea. The *Diamond* has a loyal following, and the varied itineraries give passengers an incentive to come back. The 700-passenger *Seven Seas Voyager* is decisively bigger and more resortlike, and boasts all-suite, all-balconied cabins.

The line sold its popular small ship, *Song of Flower,* at the end of the 2003 Europe season. The 184-passenger *Hanseatic* is chartered for a couple of cruises to Antarctica, where it's the most luxurious ship in the market. The 320-passenger *Paul Gauguin* is based year-round in the South Pacific, and the 490-passenger *Seven Seas Navigator* is spending the summer cruising from New York to Bermuda, while the 700-passenger *Mariner* spends the summer in Alaska.

PASSENGER PROFILE

Radisson passengers are usually a well-traveled lot with high incomes, some still working and some retired. Passengers are attracted by the luxurious accommodations and outstanding dining experience, and tend to be 45 and up. The European itineraries are a big draw, but the ship's loyal following will accompany it to less culturally rich destinations as well. Most passengers hail from North America, though there are likely to be some Europeans and Australians aboard. The line has been trying to make itineraries more soft adventure and shorter, which is drawing a younger crowd including families.

DINING

The line prides itself on having some of the best food afloat and ever-changing menus. The *Radisson Diamond's* dining room is one of the best settings for lunch or dinner on the high seas, and the Italian headwaiters run a very good show. On both ships, dinner is open seating (you can dine with whom you like) and passengers in a romantic mood can usually obtain a table for two. Guests can also have full-service meals from the Compass Rose dining room menu served in their suite or on the balcony. Dinners in the dining room are far above the norm, featuring Black Angus beef, lobster, and such unusual treats as ostrich, all creatively served on fine china in a nouvelle cuisine fashion (the portions are small, but there are enough courses that you won't leave hungry). Both ships also offer wonderful **breakfast and lunchtime buffets** for those who don't want to have these meals in the formal dining room. The *Voyager* also has a casual dinner option in the Lido dining area, La Veranda, which converts at night into a bistro featuring a waiter-served Mediterranean menu and an antipasto buffet. An alternative, reservations-only **Italian restaurant** is housed in the Grill (part of the indoor/outdoor buffet complex) on the *Radisson Diamond.* There is no cover charge, and on the *Diamond* you get the added bonus of singing waiters. The *Voyager* also boasts two reservations-only dining venues, Signatures, where the cuisine is French (and impressively overseen by chefs from Le Cordon Bleu), and Latitudes, offering a creative American menu. And there is no cover charge at either.

Wines are complimentary at lunch and dinner and include choices that even wine connoisseurs will find impressive. **Room service** is available 24 hours a day.

Radisson Seven Seas Fleet Itineraries

Ship	Home Ports & Season	Itinerary
Radisson Diamond*	**7-day Spain and Portugal,** Madeira (Spain) (May); **7-day W. Med,** Barcelona (Spain), Monte Carlo (Monaco) (May, July, Aug, Sept); **7-day E. Med,** Civitavecchia/Rome (Italy), Istanbul (Turkey), Athens/Piraeus (Greece), Venice (Italy) (May–Oct); **7-day Italy,** Venice and Civitavecchia/Rome (Italy) (June–Oct); **10-day W. Med,** Civitavecchia/Rome (Italy) (Oct)	**7-day Spain and Portugal:** Port calls include Lisbon (Portugal), and Palma and Malaga (Spain); **7-day W. Med:** Port calls may include Mahon and Barcelona (Spain), Sete, Cannes, St-Tropez, and Marseille (France), Monte Carlo (Monaco), Livorno/Florence and Portofino (Italy); **7-day E. Med:** Port calls may include Sorrento and Taormin (Italy), Santorini, Gythion, Corfu, Rhodes, Mykonos, and Nafplion (Greece), and Dikili and Kusadasi (Turkey); **7-day Italy:** Port calls include Dubrovnik (Croatia), Taormina and Sorrento (Italy); **10-day W. Med:** Port calls include Livorno/Florence (Italy), Monte Carlo (Monaco), Barcelona, Malaga, and Cadiz (Spain), and Casablanca (Morocco)
Seven Seas Voyager*	**7-day W. Med,** Madeira (Spain) (May); **7-day Med,** Monte Carlo (Monaco) (May); **11-day W. Med,** Monte Carlo (Monaco), Rouen (France) (June, Sept); **9-day British Isles,** Dover (England) (June); **7- to 12-day Norway,** Copenhagen (Denmark) (June–July); **7-day Baltics,** Copenhagen (Denmark) and Stockholm (Sweden) (July–Aug); **11-day Northern Europe,** Stockholm (Sweden) (Aug); **7-day Italy,** Monte Carlo (Monaco) and Venice (Italy) (Sept–Oct); **7-day E. Med,** Venice (Italy), Piraeus/Athens (Greece), and Istanbul (Turkey) (Sept–Oct); **11-day Med,** Monte Carlo (Monaco) (Nov)	**7-day W. Med:** Port calls include Cadiz, Malaga, and Barcelona (Spain), and St-Tropez (France); **7-day Med:** Port calls include Civitavecchia/Rome, Sorrento, and Taormina (Italy), Mykonos (Greece), and Kusadasi (Turkey); **11-day W. Med:** Port calls may include Malaga, Cadiz, Barcelona, and Bilbao (Spain), Lisbon (Portugal), Bordeaux and St-Malo (France); **9-day British Isles:** Port calls include Waterford and Dublin (Ireland), Holyhead (Wales), and Ayr/Glasgow, Isle Of Skye, Invergordon (Scotland); **7- to 12-day Norway:** Port calls may include Olden, Trondheim, Gravdal, Honningsvag, Tromso, Hellesylt, Geiranger, Gudvangen, and Flaam (Norway); **7-day Baltics:** Port calls include Tallinn (Estonia), St. Petersburg (Russia), and Helsinki (Finland); **11-day Northern Europe:** Port calls include Tallinn (Estonia), St. Petersburg (Russia), Copenhagen (Denmark), Hamburg (Germany), and Amsterdam (Netherlands); **7-day Italy:** Port calls may include St-Tropez (France), Hvar (Croatia), and Portofino, Livorno/Florence, Civitavecchia/Rome, Sorrento, and Taormina (Italy); **7-day E. Med:** Port calls may include Dubrovnik (Croatia), Corfu, Thessaloniki, Rhodes, Santorini, Nafplion, and Mykonos (Greece), and Kusadasi (Turkey); **11-day Med:** Port calls include Civitavecchia/Rome, Sorrento, Taormina, and Venice (Italy), Dubrovnik (Croatia), Piraeus/Athens (Greece), and Kusadasi (Turkey)

*Radisson Diamond *also does a Black Sea itinerary;* Seven Seas Voyager *also does a Canary Islands itinerary.*

ACTIVITIES

These ships are fairly low-key in this area, with the emphasis on the destinations. But that's not to say there's not plenty to do on board for those who want it. The **cultural enrichment lectures** are a big draw and include experts in the fields of European art, culture, wine and food, history, and current affairs. There are shuffleboard and Ping-Pong tournaments, golf-putting competitions, an occasional cooking demonstration or wine tasting, art auctions, computer classes, and even instruction in the fine art of pom-pom making. On select sailings on the *Voyager,* you can sign up for a series of hands-on cooking lessons by a Le Cordon Bleu chef (for an extra charge of $395). The ships have outdoor pools, casinos, and a good selection of free videos to take to the cabin. The *Radisson Diamond's* spa is okay, but the *Voyager's* is far more impressive. The spa on the *Diamond* is operated by the ubiquitous Steiner, while on the *Voyager* the spa is operated by aromatherapy guru Judith Jackson, who presents an interesting array of treatments. The gym on the *Voyager* is oceanview and well equipped. **Bridge instructors** are on board all *Voyager* and select *Diamond* cruises. You can send and receive e-mails on all ships for roughly $1 a message.

CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS

New—both ships offer **summer activities programs** for children, although they do not have specific children's play spaces (activities are instead offered in a lounge). On the *Diamond* and *Voyager,* youth counselors will be on board most cruises June through August. The youth program offers activities designed for children in age groups 6 to 11 and 12 to 17. Still, for the most part, these ships are geared towards adults, and kids who do come on board should enjoy adult company.

ENTERTAINMENT

Entertainment is Broadway-style productions and the ships carry pianists who play during afternoon tea and at the cocktail hour. Guest performers are featured on each cruise (on one sailing we were on presented members of the Florida Philharmonic), and may include a comedian. A five-piece orchestra provides music for dancing. Only a few passengers stay up to the wee hours on these port-intensive cruises, although the *Voyager* and *Diamond* have spaces that function as late-night discos (they tend to attract more crew than passengers). Gentlemen hosts are on board the *Voyager* and select *Diamond* cruises to dance with single ladies.

SERVICE

The personnel is primarily European, with some Filipinos, and all the ships are very service oriented. Room service is popular on all the vessels, and you can order a full meal from the dining room menu served course by course (if you book a veranda cabin you can even eat outside). Guests in top suites on the *Voyager* get butler service. Tips are included in the cruise fare. There are laundry and dry cleaning services, and the *Voyager* has self-service laundry facilities as well.

Radisson Diamond

The Verdict

A great ship for touring Europe in luxury and privacy, with low passenger capacity and a terrific enrichment program.



Radisson Diamond (*photo: Radisson Seven Seas*)

Specifications

Size (in tons)	20,295	Officers	Scandinavian
Number of Cabins	177	Crew	200 (European)
Number of Outside Cabins	177	Passenger/Crew Ratio	1.77 to 1
Cabins with Verandas	123	Year Built	1992
Number of Passengers	354	Last Major Refurbishment	2002

Frommer's Ratings (Scale of 1–5)

Cabin Comfort & Amenities	5	Pool, Fitness & Spa Facilities	4
Ship Cleanliness & Maintenance	4	Children's Facilities	N/A
Public Comfort/Space	3	Decor	3

The *Radisson Diamond* is the most unusual-looking cruise ship afloat, and is by far the world's largest catamaran with overnight accommodations. Her cabins are roomy and meant for spending a quiet afternoon. Dining, whether at the buffet or in one of the loveliest dining rooms afloat, is tops. However, her public rooms are an odd hotel design and lack connection to the sea.

Cabins & Rates

Cabins	Brochure Rates*	Bathtub	Fridge	Hair Dryer	Sitting Area	TV
Outside	$3,695–$4,795	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Suite	$7,395	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

**Rates include gratuities, wine with dinner, soft drinks, and in-room bar setup.*

CABINS Most staterooms have picture windows, spacious teak balconies, and solid partitions for privacy. Spacious sitting areas, TVs, VCRs, phones, stocked refrigerators, four complimentary bottles of liquor, safes, queen beds, hair dryers, and combination shower baths are common to all—as is storage that is only adequate.

PUBLIC AREAS Entry is through the impressive Deck 6 lobby, replete with mirrors, walls of bird's-eye maple, and lovely rose-patterned carpeting. A circular staircase and two glass elevators rise through the five-story atrium. The sleek tri-level lounge on Deck 8 offers dancing and shows, but sight lines are good only from the first couple of rows, and the windowless piano bar draws few patrons at cocktail hour. The small casino contains three blackjack tables, one Caribbean stud poker table, one roulette wheel, and a sweep of slot machines. For conferences and incentive groups, there are meeting rooms, a business center, secretarial services, and computer hookups. The library has plenty of current books and videos. The stunning main dining room seats 230 with great views in three directions.

ALTERNATIVE DINING Don Vito's Italian Trattoria is created every evening in The Grill (the same space used for breakfast and luncheon buffets), and features a set tasting menu and singing waiters. Reservations are required, but there is no cover charge.

POOL, FITNESS & SPA FACILITIES The spa on Deck 11 offers facials, massages, herbal wraps, saunas, steam rooms, a full-service beauty salon, and a state-of-the-art fitness center. A jogging track and driving range are also on board. The retractable marina platform astern provides in-port access to water-skiing, jet-skiing, and sailing. Passengers congregate on Deck 10 to sunbathe, read, and chat around the small pool, whirlpool, and bar. The ship boasts more deck space per passenger than any other ship afloat and deck chairs are ample, as is protection from the sun. Waiters serve free soft drinks.

Seven Seas Voyager

The Verdict

There's something nicely democratic about Radisson's newest vessel: All guests get to sleep in suites with balconies.



Seven Seas Voyager (*photo: Radisson Seven Seas*)

Specifications

Size (in tons)	49,000	Officers	European
Number of Cabins	350	Crew	447 (European/Filipino)
Number of Outside Cabins	350	Passenger/Crew Ratio	.63 to 1
Cabins with Verandas	350	Year Built	2003
Number of Passengers	700	Last Major Refurbishment	N/A

Frommer's Ratings (Scale of 1–5)

Cabin Comfort & Amenities	5	Pool, Fitness & Spa Facilities	4
Ship Cleanliness & Maintenance	5	Children's Facilities	4
Public Comfort/Space	5	Decor	4

Some Radisson fans have complained the line has gone too big. We happen to like the ship and the extra space it affords. While it carries only 700 passengers, the vessel offers the same amount of space as some other lines' ships provide for 1,600 guests, so you'll rarely feel part of a crowd. However, the ship does at times feel, well, empty, especially after 11pm when the majority of passengers seem to go to bed.

Cabins & Rates

Cabins	Brochure Rates*	Bathtub	Fridge	Hair Dryer	Sitting Area	TV
Suite	$3,995–$15,695	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

**Rates include gratuities, wine with dinner, soft drinks, and in-room bar setup.*

CABINS Every cabin is a suite with ocean views and offers a balcony for enjoying ocean breezes, and a nice sitting area, as well as a walk-in closet. Of course some suites are bigger than others—the biggest are apartment-size and

very pricey. The balconies vary in size, too, with those on standard suites big enough for just two chairs, while those on larger suites have room for two lounge chairs as well. In either case, before you step outside in your birthday suit, keep in mind not all the balconies are really private (your neighbors may be able to see you). All suites come with a king-size bed or two twins done up with feather pillows and duvets, marble bathrooms with bathtubs, free bottles of liquor and soft drinks, TVs and VCRs, hair dryers, bathrobes, and such. The Category HS suites in the back of the ship offer lots of space and big balconies, and are a good deal for those not bothered by engine noise. Eighty-eight suites in categories B and higher come with butler service.

PUBLIC AREAS The *Voyager's* decor is low-key and elegant, a bit brighter than its sister ship *Mariner* (which some complained was too bland). Most rooms feature windows that allow the ocean views to be the main attraction. There is artwork on display (much of it for sale). The most striking space is the eight-deck atrium, which includes glass elevators, an angled metal and wood staircase, and a dramatic, butterflylike glass sculpture as its centerpiece.

The theater is appropriately plush with cozy seating and tables for drinks. Nicely executed productions are presented here and make good use of the facility. The ship's other lounges, including the Horizon Lounge and Voyager Lounge on the top deck, are nice, but feel pretty empty at night (the Horizon Lounge is popular for afternoon tea, however). Likewise, the disco rarely attracts more than a dozen revelers. A more popular space is the casino, which offers tables for blackjack, roulette, Caribbean stud poker, and craps, and some five dozen slot machines. The ship's cozy cigar bar is complete with a fake fireplace and comfy leather chairs, and offers hand-rolled cigars for sale (but it is another space that is often empty). The vessel boasts two card rooms, boutiques, and a big, open library with books and videos. Meanwhile, a popular classroom-style Internet cafe offers 15 computers (there are three more in the library) that seem to be in almost constant use. Although the Compass Rose dining room is nice, it is a bit awkwardly divided into two long, narrow sections; however, nearly everyone gets to dine with an ocean view.

ALTERNATIVE DINING The *Voyager* offers an impressive two reservations-only alternative dining venues with no cover charge at either. Signatures is a lovely space done up with red velvet and candlelight, with top-notch cuisine overseen by chefs from Le Cordon Bleu in Paris. The changing menu includes such treats as foie gras terrine with leek and truffle vinaigrette, and roast breast of quail with turnips in a morel mushroom sauce. Latitudes offers a creative American cuisine tasting menu (that changes nightly) in a modern setting, with meals carefully paired with music. Some people choose to eat at these venues more than once, which you are free to do as long as you can get a reservation (make your plans early on in the cruise). La Veranda also serves a bistro-style menu as a casual alternative at night.

POOL, FITNESS & SPA FACILITIES The *Voyager's* spa is run by Judith Jackson, and offers treatments including an 80-minute hydro bath and aromatherapy massage combo. In the locker room, you'll find such nice features as pre-filled lockers with a bathrobe, slippers, towel, and bottle of Evian. The oceanview gym has about a dozen machines, weights, and an exercise area that fills up rather quickly. The roster of classes includes yoga, Fitball, and kickboxing. There's a track for joggers, and paddle tennis and golf-driving cages on the upper deck. The Sun Deck boasts a good-size heated swimming pool and three whirlpools.

4 Seabourn Cruise Line

SHIPS IN EUROPE Seabourn Legend • Seabourn Pride • Seabourn Spirit

6100 Blue Lagoon Dr., Ste. 400, Miami, FL 33126. ✆ **800/929-9595** or 305/463-3000. Fax 305/463-3010. www.seabourn.com.

Small and intimate (carrying just 204 passengers each), these ships are like floating private clubs, embracing all who enter in doting service and the finest dinner cuisine at sea. They're genuine aristocrats, with perfect manners. Marketed as "The Yachts of Seabourn," the ships have unprecedented amounts of onboard space and staff for each passenger, and an ever-so-polite ambience that appeals to prosperous passengers who appreciate the emphasis on their individual pleasures. All women entering the dining room are offered the arm of a handsome waiter, and your cabin steward will draw you a bath if you so desire (and with designer bath salts, too).

Although now owned by industry giant Carnival Corporation, the ships have a strong Norwegian heritage including Norwegian officers and a good number of Norwegians among the international crew.

Pros

- **More staff per passenger than on most other lines.**
- **Excellent dinner cuisine.** Rivaling the best land-based restaurants, the food is exquisite with creative, flavorful, well-presented dishes served with complementing and complimentary wines.
- **Large cabins.** Cabins are actually roomy suites, with cushy features like walk-in closets, bathtubs, and complimentary stocked minibars.
- **Free booze.** Liquor and wines are included in the cruise fare.
- **A free shore excursion in one port per cruise.** This exclusive Seabourn outing might be a glass-roofed canal boat ride to the Historical Museum in Amsterdam or a visit to a private villa in Malta—always something not to be found in the shore excursion brochures of most lines.

Compared with other Luxury lines, here's how Seabourn Cruise Line rates:

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Outstanding
Enjoyment Factor					✓
Dining					✓
Activities		✓			
Children's Program	N/A				
Entertainment			✓		
Service					✓
Overall Value				✓	

Cons

- **Limited activities.** The Seabourn ships have limited organized activities on board, but what they do offer is good. For the most part, guests are content with socializing over cocktails and catching up on their reading.
- **Shallow drafts, rocky seas.** If you happen to be sailing through rough water, you'll know it. These small ships get tossed around more than the megas.
- **Few or no private verandas.** It's unfortunate that the Seabourn ships have only six private balconies apiece (the line tried to correct the situation by adding narrow French balconies onto 36 cabins on each ship, but it's not the same thing as having your own private outdoor space).

THE FLEET

The Seabourn fleet today comprises three globetrotting vessels, all of which will spend time in Europe this year—the ***Seabourn Legend*** (built in 1992) and the ***Seabourn Pride*** (built in 1988). The other is the ***Seabourn Spirit.*** All three weigh 10,000 tons and carry 204 passengers.

PASSENGER PROFILE

Most passengers have more than comfortable household incomes, usually in excess of $250,000. They tend to range in age from the late 40s on up. Many are retired (or never worked to begin with), and many have net worths in the millions, and sometimes much higher. The majority of passengers are couples, and there is always a handful of singles as well. Shorter cruises usually draw families, on board in some cases for family reunions with several generations in tow.

In many ways, the passenger roster looks like the membership of a posh country club. Most passengers are North American, and dress expensively, though not flashily. Some passengers may not be excessively chatty, but most enjoy a nice conversation at least at dinner, the social event of the day. They are likely to have sailed aboard other luxury cruise lines and stayed in five-star hotels. Passengers expect to receive good service in an atmosphere of discreet gentility.

The line's history of repeaters is among the highest in the industry, sometimes as many as 50% aboard any given cruise.

DINING

Cuisine is one of Seabourn's strongest points, especially at dinner, which is offered in the simply named The Restaurant. Meals are offered on an open-seating basis, allowing guests to dine whenever they choose and with whomever they want, within a window of several hours at each mealtime.

While tables seat up to 8 or 10, you'll almost never have a problem getting a table for two if that's your wish. Also, tables are spaced far enough apart so you'll never feel crowded.

Value Seabourn Specials

The line offers early booking discounts of 35%, plus another 10% if you book two 1-week cruises back-to-back. Other deals might include additional discounts and offers of free air, based on how specific cruises are selling.

Seabourn Cruise Line Fleet Itineraries

Ship	Home Ports & Season	Itinerary
Seabourn Legend*	**7-day Spain,** Lisbon (Portugal) (Apr, Oct); **7-day W. Med,** Barcelona (Spain), Nice (France), and Civitavecchia/Rome (Italy) (Apr–Oct); **14-day W. Med,** Lisbon (Portugal), Barcelona (Spain), Civitavecchia/Rome (Italy), and Nice (France) (May–Oct)	**7-day Spain:** Port calls may include Gibraltar (U.K.), Tarragona, Cadiz, Malaga, Cartegena, and Alicante (Spain); **7-day W. Med:** Port calls may include Sete, Cassis, Cannes, Le Lavandou, Sanary-Sur-Mer, Porquerolles, Clavi, and St-Tropez (France), Portovenere, Portofino, Livorno/Florence, Porto Azzuro, Palermo, Sorrento, and Porto Cervo (Italy), Mahon, Palma, and Valencia (Spain), and Monte Carlo (Monaco); **14-day W. Med:** Port calls may include Gibraltar (U.K.), Malaga, Mahon, Palma, Valencia, Cadiz, Tarragona, Cartagena, Alicante, and Barcelona (Spain), Port Vendres, Sete, Cassis, Canne, Sanary-Sur-Mer, St-Tropez, Nice, Calvi, Porto Vecchio, Le Lavandou, and Porquerolles (France), Portovenere, Portofino, Livorno/Florence, Civitavecchia/Rome, Palermo, Sorrento, Porto Cervo, and Porto Azzurro (Italy), Monte Carlo (Monaco), and La Goulette (Italy)
Seabourn Pride*	**16-day Med,** Barcelona (Spain), Istanbul (Turkey), and Lisbon (Portugal) (Apr, May); **11-day Spain and France,** Lisbon (Portugal) and Barcelona (Spain) (Apr); **14-day Spain and France,** Lisbon (Portugal) (May); **14-day British Isles,** London (June); **14-day Baltics,** London (June–Aug); **14-day Northern Europe/Norway,** London (July, Aug)	**16-day Med:** Port calls may include Monte Carlo (Monaco), Sorrento, Taormina, Livorno/Florence, and Venice (Italy), Dubrovnik (Croatia), Corfu, Crete, and Piraeus/Athens (Greece), Valletta (Malta), El Kantaoui (Tunisia), Cannes (France), Barcelona, Cadiz, and Palma (Spain), and Kusadasi (Turkey); **11-day Spain and France:** Port calls include Gibraltar (U.K.), Malaga, Almeria, and Valencia (Spain), and Port Vendres (France); **14-Day Spain and France:** Port calls include Gijon and Santander (Spain), St-Jean-De-Luz, Bordeaux, St. Malo, and Rouen (France), St. Peter Port (Guernsey), and Oostende (Belgium); **14-day British Isles:** Port calls include Caen (France), St. Peter Port (Guernsey), Fowey (England), Waterford and Dublin (Ireland), Tobermory, Invergordon, and Leith/Edinburgh (Scotland); **14-day Baltics:** Port calls include Warnemunde (Germany), Tallinn (Estonia), St. Petersburg (Russia), and Stockholm (Sweden); **14-day Northern Europe/Norway:** Port calls include Leith/Edinburgh (Scotland), Gudvangen, Flaam, Bergen, Ulvik, and Oslo (Norway), Copenhagen (Denmark), and Amsterdam (Netherlands)
Seabourn Spirit*	**7- to 14-day E. Med,** Alexandria (Egypt), Civitavecchia/Rome (Italy), Istanbul (Turkey), Piraeus/Athens (Greece), and Venice (Italy) (May–Oct)	**7- to 14-day E. Med:** Port calls include Rhodes, Aghios Nikolaos, Katakolon, Galaxhidi, Corfu, Santorini, Patmos, Itea, Monemvasia, Piraeus/Athens, Volos, Amorgos, Mykonos, Cephalonia, and Nafplion (Greece), Messina, Sorrento, Amalfi, Civitavecchia/Rome, Venice, Capri, and Taormina (Italy), Bodrum, Kusadasi, and Istanbul (Turkey), Dubrovnik and Korcula (Croatia)

*Seabourn Legend *and* Seabourn Pride *also do Canary Islands itineraries;* Seabourn Spirit *also does Black Sea and Middle East itineraries*

Dinner is the highlight event of the day. Service is high style and extremely formal, domes lifted from entrees with military precision. Men are expected to wear jackets and, on most evenings, neckties as well. Two formal evenings are held during the course of any 1-week cruise. Many males don tuxedos (although dark suits are acceptable as well) and the events are, indeed, very formal. Staff members almost run at a trot through the elaborate, multi-course European service. It's all extremely civilized.

The cuisine itself is an eclectic mix. The *Legend, Pride,* and *Spirit* feature old favorites such as beef Wellington, Dover sole, and grilled lobster. You'll also find modern dishes inspired by celebrity chef Charlie Palmer, the line's culinary consultant, and owner of New York's tony Aureole, among other restaurants. Palmer's creations include an unbelievable goat cheese soufflé, barbecued quail with chipotle glaze, and cod presented alongside squash with truffles. Dishes are prepared to order, **lighter fare and vegetarian offerings** are available at every meal, and passengers can make virtually any special request they want. The desserts—like a trio of basil, white chocolate, and orange crème brûlées—are sublime, as are the homemade ice creams and sorbets. Lunch and dinner include **complimentary wines** from an impressive wine cellar. In fact, Seabourn is so proud of its list of complimentary wines and spirits, it put out a press release on it (the list includes more than 50 quality wines from around the world, and some 75 brands of spirits).

If your mood doesn't call for the dining room, the ships have an **alternative indoor/outdoor dining option** at the Veranda Café—at no extra charge, of course (and you don't have to dress up here even on formal nights). During the day, the Café is the preferred setting for breakfast and lunch, both offered buffet style (virtually no one goes to the dining room for breakfast or lunch), but also with a few menu items. Breakfast features the usual meats, fruits, and omelets made to order. At lunchtime, you'll find salads, sandwich makings, fresh pasta, and maybe jumbo shrimp, smoked salmon, and smoked oysters on the cold side, and hot sliced roast beef, duck, and ham on the carving board. Still, the buffets are lackluster compared to the dinner presentations. Dinners at the Café require reservations and are romantic candlelight affairs, often based on Italian, French, and seafood themes. In good weather it's a treat to eat at one of the arc of tables located aft overlooking the wake and under a protective canvas awning.

Room service is available 24 hours a day. During normal lunch or dinner hours, your private meal can mirror the dining room service, right down to the silver, crystal, and porcelain. After hours, the menu is more limited, with burgers, salads, sandwiches, and pastas. Whenever a cruise itinerary calls for a full-day stopover on a remote island, a lavish beach barbecue might be whipped up at midday. Other cruises might offer an outdoor BBQ on the sun deck, weather permitting.

ACTIVITIES

These small ships don't offer much in the way of organized activities, and that's what most passengers really love about the line.

You won't find the bingo, karaoke, or poolside contests featured by mass-market lines. The atmosphere is ever tasteful and unobtrusive. Activities include bridge, trivia contests, tours of the ship's galley, visits to the cozy library, cooking and wine demonstrations, and watching movies in your cabin. You'll soon realize that many passengers are aboard to read, quietly converse with their peers, and be ushered from one stylish spot to the next. As a nice bonus, for a couple of hours during days at sea the line offers complimentary **Random Massage Moments,** free mini-massages delivered by experienced hands for passengers sitting on deck.

That said, you don't have to be sedate, either. The *Spirit, Legend,* and *Pride* have retractable **watersports marinas** that unfold from the ships' sterns, weather and sea conditions permitting. These platforms gracefully usher passengers into the sea for water-skiing, windsurfing, sailing, snorkeling, banana-boat riding, and swimming.

There are few, if any, public announcements to disturb your solitude, which is a relief when compared to the barrage of noise broadcast aboard many other lines.

On certain cruises there are **guest lecturers,** such as noted young chefs (friends of culinary consultant Charlie Palmer), authors, or statesmen, or maybe a wine connoisseur, composer, TV director, or professor. In addition to making presentations, they mingle with guests. You can generally count on port lectures from resident travel experts.

Each ship has a small-scale, staid, and rather un-casinolike **casino** with a couple of blackjack tables and a handful of slots. Golfers can reserve tee times from an a la carte menu of top courses in Europe, and the ships also have practice golf cages.

Passengers may send e-mails at the Internet cafe for $1 per minute (sold in 15-min. increments).

CHILDREN'S PROGRAM

These ships are not geared to children, although they are permitted. If several are on board, an impromptu program may be offered, perhaps including a treasure hunt or a group showing of a children's movie. Most kids on board go around looking bored, however.

In a pinch, you may be able to arrange babysitting by an available crew member.

ENTERTAINMENT

The stage in the show lounge on each ship is not big enough for production shows, but it is big enough to feature a few performers with big voices, and that's what you get. There may be an entertaining night of Broadway show tunes performed by a trio of singers, or solo cabaret acts. A resident four-piece orchestra/dance band performs a roster of favorites for those who want to dance, while a guest piano player may take requests.

SERVICE

Seabourn tries to maintain the finest service staff of any line afloat. That's why we were a bit disappointed to find young, inexperienced waiters on a recent cruise in Europe. It's true, the waiters—mostly young northern Europeans—were some of the handsomest we've ever come across. They are, overall, charming, competent, sensitive, and discreet—among Seabourn's most valuable assets. And service at dinner was superb. But elsewhere they didn't always get things right. For instance, they seemed to have trouble keeping up with the tables at the breakfast and lunch buffet, forcing passengers to flag them down for coffee or clean place settings.

Laundry and dry cleaning are available. There are also complimentary self-service laundry rooms on all ships.

All Seabourn ships provide Molton Brown toiletries, and to keep everyone happy, your room steward will also present, on a tray, a selection of other designer soaps. Special bath salts can be ordered from cabin attendants (a menu is in the medicine cabinet); if requested, the attendant will run and prepare the bath for you.

Cabin minibars are stocked with wine, liquor of the guest's choice, and soft drinks upon check-in. And they're kept that way upon request. Fleetwide, complimentary wine is served with lunch and dinner. All drinks in public bars and lounges are complimentary. Seabourn's cruise prices, though high, are about as all-inclusive as you can get.

Across the fleet, gratuities are officially included in the cruise fare, but staff is not prohibited from accepting additional tips.

Seabourn Legend • Seabourn Pride • Seabourn Spirit

The Verdict

These ships are among the most luxurious vessels at sea, designed to let you be as social, or as private, as you like.



Seabourn Legend *(photo: Seabourn)*

Specifications

Size (in tons)	10,000	Officers	Norwegian
Number of Cabins	100	Crew	140 (Int'l)
Number of Outside Cabins	100	Passenger/Crew Ratio	1.5 to 1
Cabins with Verandas	6	Year Built	1988/1992/1989
Number of Passengers	204	Last Major Refurbishment	2002

Frommer's Rating (Scale of 1–5)

Cabin Comfort & Amenities	5	Pool, Fitness & Spa Facilities	3
Ship Cleanliness & Maintenance	4	Children's Facilities	N/A
Public Comfort/Space	5	Decor	4

These understated, beautifully designed luxury ships travel everywhere one would ever want to cruise. Passengers who like to be social and meet others with similar interests will find plenty of opportunities to do so at open-sitting meals, in the intimate public rooms, and out on deck. On the other hand, if you want to get away from it all, you can also be at a table for two in the restaurant, or in a quiet corner of the deck.

Cabins & Rates

Cabins	Brochure Rates	Bathtub	Fridge	Hair Dryer	Sitting Area	TV
Suite	$6,125–$16,415	yes*	yes	yes	yes	yes

**The four handicapped-accessible suites have showers only.*

CABINS The great majority of the accommodations are handsomely designed "Type A" 277-square-foot one-room suites (for comparison, an average cabin on Carnival is 190 sq. ft.), vary only in location, but are priced at four different levels. Suites are popular for entertaining and dining, and one can order hors d'oeuvres such as caviar and smoked salmon at no extra charge. Closet space is more than adequate for hanging clothes, but drawer space is more limited. The *Pride* and *Spirit* have twin sinks in the all-white marble bathrooms; *Legend* has a single sink.

The two Classic Suites measure 400 square feet, and two pairs of Owner's Suites are 530 and 575 square feet. These six have the only (small) verandas on the ships. French balconies with sliding glass doors (read: no space for sitting or standing, but you can let in air) are to be found in some of the 36 suites on each ship (the 277-sq.-ft. Type A suites on the top two decks).

The Owner's Suites have dining rooms and guest powder rooms. Positioned near the bow, these forward-facing suites can be somewhat uncomfortable in rough seas. The dark wood furnishings make the overall feeling more like a hotel room than a ship's suite. Owner's Suites 05 and 06 have obstructed views. Regal Suites, at 554 square feet, are simply two combined 277-square-foot Seabourn suites with one room given completely over to a lounge.

Everything about a Seabourn cabin has the well-maintained feel of an upscale Scandinavian hotel. Each unit contains a stocked bar, walk-in closet, safe, hair dryer, VCR and TV broadcasting CNN and ESPN among other channels, terry-cloth robes, and fresh fruit daily. Videotape movies are available from the ship's library, and the purser's office broadcasts films from the ship's own collection. Bed linens are Frette. A bottle of chilled Heidsieck champagne (which Seabourn offers as its house brand) awaits in each cabin on arrival. And you can bring CDs or borrow from the ship to play on the Bose sound system. There are four wheelchair-accessible suites.

PUBLIC AREAS There aren't a lot of rooms and for the most part they are so refined as to appear a bit duller than you'd expect on ships of this caliber. Art and ornamentation are conspicuous by their absence, although the *Legend* has an attractive ocean liner–motif mural in its stair foyers.

The forward-facing observation lounge offers a quiet venue during the day for reading, cards, and afternoon tea, but is usually closed at night. With its leather chairs, the aft-facing Club lounge and bar is the ship's principal social center, with music, a small band, a singer and/or pianist, and fancy hot hors d'oeuvres before and after dinner. Next door, the ship's casino beckons with gaming tables and a separate small room for slot machines. The semicircular and tiered show lounge on the deck below is the venue for musical performances, lectures, and the captain's parties.

The formal restaurant, located on the lowest deck, is a large low-ceilinged room with an open-seating policy. The Veranda Café offers casual meals during the day and romantic meals at night (see below).

ALTERNATIVE DINING The Veranda Café is open for dinner on a reservations-only basis (but with no extra fee), and offers an intimate setting under the stars. The cuisine often follows Italian, French, and seafood themes, and is served by candlelight, on Rosenthal china. In good weather it's a treat to eat at one of the arc of tables located aft overlooking the wake and under a protective canvas awning.

POOL, FITNESS & SPA FACILITIES The outdoor pool, not much used, is awkwardly situated in a shadowy location of the Lido Deck, between the twin engine uptakes, and is flanked by lifeboats that hang from both sides of the ship. A pair of whirlpools are located just forward of the pool. There's a third hot tub perched on the far forward bow deck. It's isolated and a perfect spot from which to watch a port come into sight or fade away. You can reserve this hot tub for a romantic evening complete with champagne and caviar, through the purser.

A retractable, wood-planked watersports marina opens out from the stern of the ship so passengers can hop into sea kayaks or go windsurfing, water-skiing, or snorkeling right from the ship. An attached steel mesh net creates a saltwater pool when the marina is in use.

The gym was doubled in size on each ship in 2003 and the Steiner-managed spas are adequate for ships this small. Because there's not much floor space in the gym, exercise classes are offered in The Club (classes are free, including Pilates and yoga).

5 SeaDream Yacht Club

SHIPS IN EUROPE SeaDream I • SeaDream II

2601 South Bayshore Drive, Penthouse 1B Coconut Grove, FL 33133. ✆ **800/707-4911** or 305/856-5622. Fax 305/856-7599. www.seadreamyachtclub.com

Exceptionally small and intimate by today's cruise ship standards, the two ships that make up the SeaDream Yacht Club fleet offer exceptional luxury and privacy. The atmosphere is akin to being aboard a private yacht—assuming that yacht could carry upwards of 100 people. In addition, the ships deliver outstanding personalized service, with a staff large enough to see to virtually every need, especially when it comes to dining and wining. Although this is a very upscale way of cruising, it does not insist on all the tuxedo-and-gown formality of some of the other ultra-luxury lines.

Pros

- **Exceptional personalized service.** The smallest ultra luxury ships, they have comparatively large staffs. It doesn't take long for the crew to get to know the guests and to cater to their needs.
- **Exceptional food.** All meals are superb, but dinner—open-seating, of course—is the primary event of the evening.
- **Exceptional value.** With liquor and tips and such included in the price on top of some really good advance-purchase discounts, the prices have been really low.

Cons

- **Not many organized activities.** For the most part, guests are left to entertain themselves.
- **Smallish cabins.** While the ships have been refurbished very well, room sizes are on the small side and there are no verandas.
- **Not enough tables for two or four.** Often times, guests are asked to sit with other couples at meals.

Compared with other Luxury lines, here's how SeaDream Yacht Club rates:

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Outstanding
Enjoyment Factor					✓
Dining					✓
Activities			✓		
Children's Program	N/A				
Entertainment				✓	
Service					✓
Overall Value					✓

THE FLEET

The SeaDream fleet consists of two 4,260-ton, 110-guest vessels. Originally, they comprised the Sea Goddess fleet before they were purchased by Seabourn Cruise Line (and became *Seabourn Goddess I* and *II*). The original founder of Seabourn, Atle Brynestad, subsequently purchased the two ships from Cunard. Mr. Brynestad, along with his friend and well-known industry executive, Larry Pimentel, former president of Seabourn, are the co-owners of SeaDream Yacht Club, which was founded in 2001. They put the two ships through extensive refurbishing and refitting, and the vessels were launched under their new names, ***SeaDream I and SeaDream II,*** in 2002.

PASSENGER PROFILE

These two ships certainly attract an upscale crowd, one that would be at home in the finest of hotels, country clubs, and posh resorts the world over. But they don't come across as snooty or stand-offish. Rather they are comfortable about themselves and seem to enjoy the relaxing, casual nature of the large yacht/small cruise ship experience.

Many of the guests have sailed before on the ships when they were either Sea Goddess or Seabourn so they know what to expect and they really enjoy the personalized service. They certainly enjoy the lack of a heavy schedule of planned activities during the day and evening.

Most of the guests, even during the European season, are from the United States or the United Kingdom, so the primary language is English. This is actually very pleasant in the evenings on board when the primary activity is dinner and conversation in the dining room and lounges.

DINING

As befits the understated elegance of the SeaDream ships, the main dining room is called simply the Dining Salon. And there are no tie-ins with celebrity chefs or flowery presentations of exotic nature. Rather, the menus are exceptionally well-thought out, prepared by a terrific culinary team and served by a wonderful wait staff.

The room itself has enough seating so that all guests can dine at one time in open seating format, but there could be more tables for two and four. The maitre d'hotel does a terrific juggling act to make sure that guests can sit with whomever and whenever they want just about as often as they can; when they do have to share tables, it's done very graciously. All table and glass wear is of very high quality, enhanced by candlelight. Presented leather-bound, the dinner menu contains a wide variety of international options, and special orders are welcomed as long as the ingredients are on board the ship. A nice selection of wines is presented as part of the **complimentary beverage program.** Guests can also order from the 3,000-bottle wine cellar. Service during dinner is impeccable, European style, and absolutely at the pace of the guest.

As part of the refurbishment of the ship, a new outdoor covered restaurant, the Topside, has been created. Used for breakfast and lunch, weather permitting, it offers both buffet and grilled/cooked-to-order items that seem very imaginative and extensive considering the space that is allocated for cooking and preparation. Seating in this area is quite comfortable on a combination of banquets and wicker chairs. When the weather is inclement, breakfast and/or lunch are served in the Dining Salon.

Once during a cruise, also weather permitting, the Topside Restaurant is the scene of an outdoor barbecue dinner featuring steaks, lobster, fish, and so on. It's

a marvelous event and elegant as well. Champagne and caviar are available at all hours and the Sea Goddess tradition of a beach barbecue including a Champagne and Caviar Splash has been extended to SeaDream. In the Library, fresh scones and cookies always seemed to be available.

Of course, there's **24-hour room service** including course-by-course meals if desired.

ACTIVITIES

The SeaDream ships are very well designed and contain an appropriate amount of public space. Beyond that, the company is very clear that they do not provide a lot of planned activities for their guests. The ports of call take up the bulk of the time; beyond that, guests can determine their own schedule. But there actually is a fair amount of things to do.

Okay, one of the first activities is pretty much doing nothing—especially ensconced in one of the refurbished areas. When the ships were redone, they installed Balinese Dreambeds on the aft portion of Deck 6. These are oversized, thick-cushioned loungers, great for reading or sunning or sitting. Combined with the lounge chairs forward on this deck, there are lots of sitting/sunning areas. On Deck 3, there's the smallish pool and whirlpool, with an ample number of lounge chairs as well.

There's an enlarged spa/beauty salon/gym area on Deck 4. On a per guests basis, there's actually a considerable amount of workout equipment that hardly ever seemed to be in use. The spa features an Asian Wellness and Well-being concept that SeaDream operates itself. There is also a golf simulator, on Deck 6, that features 50 courses.

Depending on the itinerary and the weather, the retractable water sports platform can get lots of use. Wave runners, kayaks, water skis, snorkel gear, wake boards, and a sailboat are available. Mountain bikes can be used in port and there's a Segway for the fun of it.

Back indoors, the Library has books, newspapers, board games, and two computers with Internet connections (reasonably priced). While there is no major entertainment, a singer or duo usually performs before and/or after dinner in the main salon. This is also the site of the pre-dinner talk featuring information about the next day's port of call. A small casino has a couple of blackjack tables and a handful of slot machines (not much action for a serious gambler).

Late night, the Piano Bar (indoors) and the Top of the Yacht Bar (outdoors) are the two locations for a nightcap.

CHILDREN'S PROGRAM

There are no organized programs for children and the ships really aren't geared towards them. They are permitted of course but kids really are expected to behave themselves.

ENTERTAINMENT

Other than the combo or singer referred to earlier in the activities section, there really is not entertainment provided. The primary evening entertainment is dinner and conversation.

SERVICE

With a maximum guest count of 110 and a crew of 90, one can expect an extraordinary high level of service. And it's achieved. But what makes it really special is that the crew can really get to know guests' individualized needs and wants very quickly. They deliver personalized attention without being overly

SeaDream Yacht Club Fleet Itineraries

Ship	Home Ports & Season	Itinerary
SeaDream I and SeaDream II	**4- to 7-day W. Med,** Malaga (Spain), Monte Carlo (Monaco), Nice (France), Civitavecchia/Rome, and Venice (Italy) (May–Nov); **7-day E. Med,** Venice (Italy), Piraeus/Athens (Greece), Istanbul (Turkey), and Nafplion (Greece) (July–Sept)	**4- to 7-day W. Med:** Port calls may include Cartagena, Mahon, Motril, Ceuta, Seville, and Barcelona (Spain), Cassis, Calvi, Bonafacio, Porquerollos, Porto Vecchio, Cannes, St-Tropez, Antibes, and Villafranche (France), Capri, Sorrento, Taormina, Giglio, Positano, Porto Azzurro, Giannutri, Ponza, Lipari, Gaeta, Porto Cervo, Portovenere, Portofino (Italy), Corfu (Greece), Dubrovnik, Hvar, and Losinj (Croatia), Lisbon (Portugal), Casablanca (Morocco); **7-day E. Med:** Port calls include Losinj and Dubrovnik (Croatia), Corfu, Fiskardho, Itea, Nafplion, Monemvasia, Volos, Skiathos, Samos, Rhodes, Santorini, Mykonos, and Hydra (Greece), Bodrum, Canakkale, and Kusadasi (Turkey)

familiar, the bane of many a cruise line. It's European-style service that is impeccable, prompt, and correct.

This really comes into play in the dining area. Whether it's the more casual breakfast or lunch buffet or for the more formal dinner service, the wait staff is always proper and makes sure to meet a guest's needs. Special requests are met with a smile and it seems as though individual styles are known very early on in the cruise.

It's also a treat to be sitting on deck and have a member of the wait staff proactively offer to bring you something or to just bring it without being requested. In this casual, yachtlike surrounding, where there is no tipping necessary, the staff takes great pride in what they do; it clearly shows.

Seadream I • Seadream II

THE VERDICT

For a small ship, resort-casual experience, these two large yachts cannot be beat.



SeaDream II *(photo: SeaDream)*

Specifications

Size (in tons)	4,260	Officers	Int'l
Number of Cabins	55	Crew	90 (Int'l)
Number of Outside Cabins	55	Passenger/Crew Ratio	1.2 to 1
Cabins with Verandas	0	Year Built	1984/1985
Number of Passengers	110	Last Major Refurbishment	2002

Frommer's Rating (Scale of 1–5)

Cabin Comfort & Amenities	5	Pool, Fitness & Spa Facilities	3
Ship Cleanliness/Maintenance	4	Children's Facilities	N/A
Public Comfort/Space	5	Decor	4

Value Special Savings

SeaDream offers substantial early booking discounts, up to 65% off brochure price.

On these elegant but casual ships, service is superb, dining is excellent, and the dress code leaves out tuxes and gowns. Guests can determine their own pace; there is no effort by the cruise line to fill the day with scheduled activities. In many ports, a member of the dining room executive staff or culinary team may lead guests on a food or wine shopping expedition or tasting. At breakfast or lunch, the Captain may just wander by and ask guests if he can join them—it's just that kind of atmosphere.

These are the kinds of ships where conversation is entertainment and where privacy is respected. Obviously, the ultra-luxury experience means it's not going to be an inexpensive cruise (although there are great deals to be had with advance-purchase discounts). But it adds up to a really good value with such items as gratuities and most alcoholic beverages included. So the guests have money and can travel well. But it's not an off-putting group. They're very comfortable and that makes for a warm, friendly environment; it's not a can-you-top-this-jewelry-item style.

Cabins & Rates

Cabins	Brochure Rates	Bathtub	Fridge	Hair Dryer	Sitting Area	TV
Staterooms	$5,900–$17,250	Owner Suite Only	yes	yes	yes	yes

Note: *There are no wheelchair accessible suites.*

CABINS

There are 55 suites for the 110 guests. Fifty-four are defined as Yacht Club Staterooms that are 195 square feet. The size of the rooms by today's standards is not huge but they are very well designed and the blond woods and excellent use of mirrors make them appear larger than they really are.

When the ships were refurbished, the bathrooms were spectacularly upgraded. The marble-countered and walled space is beautiful. The teeny tubs have been replaced by a great glass-enclosed shower with a multi-jet massage unit. While the overall bathroom size is still not huge, shelving is sufficient and there's cupboard space under the sink. Lighting is very good. Toiletries are by Bulgari—very classy.

The bedroom/sitting area can be divided by curtain for privacy—nice since the sitting area is next to the window. One of a couple can sleep in; the other can enjoy the light in the morning. Beds can be configured as twins or as a queen. Linens are Belgian cotton, pillows are a nice quality down, and the bed coverings can either be duvets or regular blankets. Amenities in the room are quite plentiful: a fully stocked refreshment area including mini-fridge, a data-port including access for e-mail, flat-screen TV, CD/DVD player (good selection at the reception desk), MP3 jukebox (although the multiple control for the electronics can be a bit overwhelming), easy to operate thermostats, 110 current, private safe, direct-dial phone, decent lighting, and hair dyer. There's plenty of closet and drawer space.

Sixteen Yacht Club Staterooms are convertible into eight Commodore Club Staterooms that are essentially double-size rooms measuring 390 square feet—the crew takes out the bedroom furniture from one of the two rooms and turns it into an extra sitting room and a dining area for four, with the benefit of an identical second bathroom and more closet and drawer space.

The one Owner's Suite is 447 square feet and includes a full living room, dining area, and bathroom. There's a private bedroom that has its own bathroom including separate tub and shower.

All 55 rooms enjoy ocean views. Rooms on Decks 3 and 4 have large picture windows; those on Deck 2 have large nautical portholes. Naturally, 24-hour room service is available, with in-suite course-by-course dining.

PUBLIC AREAS

Navigation around these ships is very easy. There are five public decks with staterooms located on Decks 2, 3, and 4. Public rooms are located on Decks 2 through 6. The one elevator goes from Deck 2 through 5. There's one central staircase and smaller ones fore and aft. It's not a very good ship for the travelers with disabilities. There are no staterooms that are wheelchair accessible and the upper deck is not accessible by elevator.

Deck 6 is the main outdoor deck, featuring the newly installed Balinese Dreambeds, oversized sunbeds that are great for reading, lounging, or sleeping. Regular lounge chairs are located forward with privacy shields in-between each set. The Top of the Yacht Bar, also on this deck, is popular for drinking and socializing virtually all day long.

At the Topside Restaurant, outdoor breakfasts and lunches are served, weather permitting. An outdoor barbecue dinner is also served here one time per cruise—a true treat. The Main Salon is a nice, quiet room during the day for relaxing, reading, and quiet conversation. In the evening, it's the general meeting location for a drink and the pre-dinner chat about the next day's activities/ports. Late night, it's a place for whatever form of entertainment is on board (in other words, the singer or the combo) or a movie.

Deck 2 features the most important public room on the entire ship: the Dining Salon. This is where dinner is served and, on a ship where the evening meal is the most important event of the day, this room is key. It's a beautiful room with tables for 2, 4, 6, and 8. While there could be more tables for two or four, most guests are accommodated as they want to be in open seating. When some adjustments are necessary, the executive staff handles it beautifully. The atmosphere is very elegant; table settings are of very high quality.

Deck 4 offers a library, piano bar, casino, and boutique, all small rooms.

ALTERNATIVE DINING None.

POOL, FITNESS AND SPA FACILITIES The pool is located on Deck 2 aft. It's small and is often affected by output from the smoke stack. However, it does have a whirlpool, convenient bar, and plenty of lounge chairs, and becomes a nice socializing area rather than a great swimming area.

Deck 4 forward is where the very well designed Asian Spa, Fitness Center, and Beauty Salon are located. On a per person basis, there is a lot of workout equipment on board and the room doesn't seem busy. SeaDream runs its own spa service and is dedicated to an advanced wellness program. Golf players can check their swings with the ships' golf simulator.

The ships feature a retractable water sports platform that, weather permitting, allows guests to go kayaking, wake boarding, snorkeling, wave running, swimming, water-skiing, or sailing right off the back of the ship.

6 Silversea Cruises

SHIPS IN EUROPE Silver Cloud • Silver Wind • Silver Whisper

110 E. Broward Blvd., Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301. ✆ **800/774-9996** or 954/522-4477. Fax 954/468-3034. www.silversea.com.

No arguments: the last word in quality. These all-suite ships offer an impressively high degree of comfort, ambience, and elegance, supported by excellent, attentive service both at sea and ashore, especially the newer vessels which are larger and offer more facilities.

Guests enjoy spacious suites, complimentary beverages (alcoholic or otherwise), no tipping expected, careful baggage handling, smiles all around, and a bottle of good champagne (Philipponnat, a French champagne) that greets passengers in their suites when they arrive. The luxury brands are all here—Limoges china, Christofle silverware, Frette bed linens.

The company's first two 296-passenger ships, *Silver Cloud* and *Silver Wind,* are small and intimate. Its latest two, the *Silver Shadow* (which debuted in 2000) and *Silver Whisper* (which debuted summer 2001), are slightly larger but hardly less intimate. All four offer all-suite accommodations that run from 240 square feet up to a massive 1,435 square feet, including veranda—larger than some private homes.

Dining is a joy not merely because of the quality of the food but also because you are not confined to a seating time; you can go anytime from 7:30 to 9:30pm. Come alone, with a partner, or with two or three newfound friends, and the maitre d' will find you a table. There's also an alternative dining option—a theme dinner (French, Italian, or Asian) in the Terrace Cafe several nights during the cruise.

Pros

- **A surprisingly high degree of informality.** Considering the economic level of most of those on board there's very little stuffiness.
- **Golf.** The *Silver Whisper* in Europe offers a selection of golf cruises involving play at some of Europe's best courses, from Valderrama to St. Andrews. (The golf packages are extra, of course.) Instruction on the *Whisper* is complimentary.
- **Many private verandas.** Three-quarters of the units have balconies on *Silver Wind* and *Silver Cloud,* with even more on the *Whisper.*
- **Godiva chocolates** are left on the pillow at turndown.

Compared with other Luxury lines, here's how Silversea rates:

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Outstanding
Enjoyment Factor					✓
Dining					✓
Activities			✓		
Children's Program	N/A				
Entertainment				✓	
Service					✓
Overall Value					✓

Cons

- **Limited space for entertainment on the *Wind* and *Cloud.*** Performers can only do cabaret acts.
- **Tiny, yet active casinos on all the vessels.**
- **Few tables for two on the *Wind* or *Cloud.*** You're more likely to have to sit with other passengers.

THE FLEET

The twin, ultra-deluxe, 16,800-ton ships, the ***Silver Cloud*** and ***Silver Wind,*** were built in Italy in 1994. Both will be in Europe in summer 2004. They are joined there by their bigger and equally ultra-deluxe fleetmate, the 28,258-ton, 382-passenger ***Silver Whisper.*** The *Silver Shadow,* the *Whisper's* sister ship, is in Alaska in summer 2004.

PASSENGER PROFILE

On any of these ships, the passenger manifest is apt to include high-powered entertainment industry types, Fortune 500 executives, and wealthy retirees—people who like their cruising top drawer and can pay for the best. You are not likely to find a significant number of small children, although families do come aboard, mostly for family reunions. Shorter cruises attract a younger crowd (mostly age 40 and up) as do discounted voyages. There are likely to be a good number of Europeans on board as well as Americans, Asians, and some Australians. Most people retire to bed after the evening show. If there's a late-night disco night, it won't be bustling.

DINING

Food is one of Silversea's strengths, and not just in the meals served in the dining room (called simply The Restaurant on all the ships). Other highlights include the extensive **breakfast and lunch buffets** in the Terrace Cafe on Deck 7, and the **theme dinners** served (reservations, please, but no extra charge) in the same room—whether Italian, Asian, or French, the quality is tops. In The Restaurant, the mixed menu offers excellent fish, steak cooked as requested (isn't that a novel thought!), a **vegetarian option,** a **spa option,** and more than enough variety to satisfy any taste. Special menus can be requested in advance for those with dietary requirements (they'll even print out your special selections for you so you don't feel slighted when everyone else at the table gets a menu to hold).

As a casual dining option, in good weather, tables are set up on the pool deck for dinner-under-the-stars (on a reservations basis, at no extra charge). A highlight of cruises in Europe, weather permitting, is an **outdoor barbecue** featuring grilled steaks and lobster, ribs, corn-on-the-cob, and literally dozens of salads. On the *Silver Shadow* and *Silver Whisper,* the Le Champagne **alternative-dining** restaurant showcases the cuisine of Joachim Koerper. His Girasol, located in Moraira, Spain, has earned a two-star Michelin rating. Meanwhile, *Silver Wind* and *Silver Cloud* have Saletta as their alternate venue.

If you want a very special bottle of wine at dinner or lunch, you'll have to pay the going rate. Otherwise, the very acceptable wines served in the dining room are on the house. Drinks in the bars are also complimentary, unless you request a premium brand. You can get croissants, juice, and coffee in the lounge in the very early morning. **Room service** is 24 hours, and if you order dinner in your cabin you can have it served course by course (very romantic!).

Tips **Customized Itineraries**

Silversea's new and unique Personalized Voyagers lets passengers create their own itineraries, getting on and off at select ports (you pay a daily rate, with a 5-night minimum stay required).

ACTIVITIES

On days at sea, a surprisingly full roster of activities is offered including lectures by a former ambassador, a professor, or the like, dance lessons, itinerary-appropriate language lessons, golf clinics with resident golf pros, wine-tasting seminars, cooking demonstrations, backgammon tournaments, and sessions on useful things such as napkin folding and how to buy amber jewelry. A **bridge instructor** is usually on board offering seminars and instruction and leading play. Exercise classes (some with a $10 cover charge) include Pilates and yoga. Every suite has a VCR, and movies are available in the video library (if you call room service they'll bring you a big bowl of popcorn). There are fewer activities when most people are off ship exploring. All the ships have Bloomberg Professional Service terminals guests can use for free to check stock and financial news.

Silversea throws in for free a special shore excursion called **The Silversea Experience** on every cruise. In Norway, it might be a trip to a year-round ski jump (the surface in summer is straw matting) to view an exhibition by some Olympic hopefuls. In Italy, it might include a wine-and-cheese tasting at the town hall and a welcome by the mayor. Always, it is something that nobody else offers. Other shore excursions are at the passenger's expense, although Silversea often provides shuttle service dockside to and from the city center.

Specially designated culinary cruises feature guest Relais & Chateaux chefs, and a wine series features well-known vintners.

Internet hookup is available on all ships for 75¢ per minute for download time (when you are just typing an e-mail there is no charge).

CHILDREN'S PROGRAM

Silversea has no children's program whatsoever—which really says it all, doesn't it?

ENTERTAINMENT

The entertainers are energetic, cabaret acts on the *Cloud* and *Wind.* On the *Whisper,* performers sing and dance the Broadway show tunes well enough, but can't be expected to do justice to the helicopters in *Miss Saigon* or the falling chandelier of *The Phantom of the Opera* considering the relatively small stage they have to deal with. Some of Silversea's onboard **lecturers** are well worth listening to, though.

SERVICE

Uniformly of the highest standard, and there's more than one crew member to every two passengers—a high ratio indeed. They always seem to be not only willing, but anxious, to serve. The smiles are broad and genuine and requests are fulfilled promptly.

Silversea Fleet Itineraries

Ship	Home Ports & Season	Itinerary
Silver Cloud*	**6- to 15-day W. Med,** Monte Carlo (Monaco), Lisbon (Portugal), Barcelona (Spain), Southampton (England), and Honfleur (France) (Apr, May, Aug, Sept); **7- to 10-day Baltics,** Amsterdam (Netherlands), Copenhagen (Denmark), Stockholm (Sweden), London (England), (June–Aug); **5- to 8-day Italy,** Monte Carlo (Monaco), Venice and Civitavecchia/Rome (Italy)(Sept, Oct); **17-Day Norway/Russia,** Copenhagen (Denmark) (June)	**6- to 15-Day W. Med:** Port calls may include Portofino, Sorrento, Portovenere, Livorno/Florence, and Civitavecchia/Rome (Italy), Palma, Barcelona, Malaga, La Coruna, Vigo, and Cadiz (Spain), Portimao, Lisbon, and Oporto (Portugal), Casablanca (Morocco), Toulon, Honfleur, Calvi, Ajaccio, Marseille, St-Malo, Cannes, Bordeaux, and Port Vendres (France); **7- and 10-day Baltics:** Port calls may include Hamburg and Rostock (Germany), Gdansk (Poland), Visby and Stockholm (Sweden), Tallinn (Estonia), St. Petersburg (Russia), Helsinki (Finland), Amsterdam (Netherlands); **5- to 8-day Italy:** Port calls may include Livorno/Florence, Messina, Naples, Civitavecchia/Rome, Taormina, Ancona, and Naples (Italy), Mykonos (Greece), and Dubrovnik (Croatia); **17-day Norway/Russia:** Port calls include Alesund, Geiranger, Harstad, Tromso, Honningsvag, Kristiansund, and Hammerfest (Norway), and Murmansk and Archangel (Russia)
Silver Wind**	**6- to 10-day W. Med,** Lisbon (Portugal), Barcelona (Spain), Venice and Civitavecchia/Rome (Italy), Monte Carlo (Monaco), Nice (France) (May-June, Sept, Oct); **7-day Italy,** Civitavecchia/Rome (Italy) (June); **9- to12-day E. Med,** Civitavecchia/Rome and Venice (Italy), Piraeus/Athens (Greece), Istanbul (Turkey) (July, Sept)	**6- to 10-day W. Med:** Port calls may include Gibraltar (U.K.), Cadiz, Barcelona, Malaga, Ibiza, Mahon, and Palma (Spain), Amalfi, Sorrento, Livorno/Florence, Portofino, and Taormina (Italy), Valletta (Malta), Corfu (Greece), Dubrovnik and Split (Croatia), St-Tropez, Calvi, Bonifacio, and Marseille (France); **7-day Italy:** Port calls include Portoferraio, Capri, Naples, Lipari, Portovenere, and Portofino (Italy); **9- to 12-day E. Med:** Port calls include Porto Cervo, Sorrento, Acona, and Trieste (Italy), Monemvasia, Aghios Nikolaos, Rhodes, Nafplion, Santorini, and Corfu (Greece), Kas and Kusadasi (Turkey), Dubrovnik, Split, Pula and Korcula (Croatia), and Kotor (Montenegro)

One surprising weakness, though, seems to be in the way the Italian officers on board interact with the passengers. They're polite and welcoming, of course, but they have a tendency to keep their own counsel. There is self-service laundry, and complete valet services including laundry are also available. Tips are included in the cruise fare.

Silversea Fleet Itineraries *(continued)*

Ship	Home Ports & Season	Itinerary
Silver Whisper*	**7- and 11-day W. Med,** Barcelona (Spain), Monte Carlo (Monaco), Rome/Civitavecchia (Italy) (May); **7- to 9-day Med,** Barcelona (Spain), Athens (Greece) (June, Aug); **7-day Italy/ Croatia,** Venice, Civitavecchia/ Rome (Italy) (July);**12-day E. Med,** Istanbul (Turkey) (July)	**7- and 11-day W. Med:** Port calls may include Valencia, Amalfi, Taormina, Livorno/Florence, and Sorrento (Italy), Valencia, Mahon, Palma, and Barcelona (Spain), Marseille (France), Valletta (Malta), La Goulette (Tunisia); **7- to 9-day Med**: Port calls may include Marseille (France), Palma and Cadiz (Spain), Valletta (Malta), Taormina, Sorrento, and Trieste (Italy), Katakolon, Corfu, Mykonos, and Patmos (Greece); Split, Pula, and Dubrovnik (Croatia), and Kotor (Montenegro); **7-day Italy/Croatia:** Ports of call may include Split, Dubrovnik, and Pula (Croatia), Kotor (Yugoslavia), Corfu (Greece), and Trieste, Sorrento, and Taormina (Italy); **12-day E. Med:** Port calls include Kusadasi and Marmaris (Turkey), Rhodes, Santorini, and Corfu (Greece), Ancona (Italy), Dubrovnik (Croatia), and Kotor (Montenegro)

*Silver Cloud *also does Middle East itineraries;* Silver Whisper *also does Black Sea and Middle East itineraries.*
** The Silver Wind *is under charter for the Olympics in Athens for August 2004.*

Silver Cloud • Silver Wind

The Verdict

Intimate, elegant, and warm, these ships are unquestionably among the leaders in their category.



Silver Cloud *(photo: Silversea)*

Specifications

Size (in tons)	16,800	Officers	Italian
Number of Cabins	148	Crew	210 (Int'l)
Outside Cabins	148	Passenger/Crew Ratio	3 to 2
Cabins with Verandas	128	Year Built	1994/1995
Number of Passengers	296	Last Major Refurbishment	2003

Frommer's Ratings (Scale of 1–5)

Cabin Comfort & Amenities	5	Pool, Fitness & Spa Facilities	3
Ship Cleanliness & Maintenance	4	Children's Facilities	N/A
Public Comfort/Space	4	Decor	5

Don't choose a Silversea cruise if you want nonstop activity, acres of gambling facilities, and lavishly choreographed stage presentations. But, if you require only plush surroundings, great service, wonderful company, and fine food—and can afford them—it might just be for you.

Cabins & Rates

Cabins	Brochure Rates	Bathtub	Fridge	Hair Dryer	Sitting Area	TV
Suites	$4,395–$12,195	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

CABINS All the cabins are suites and all are outside. The smallest of them, the Vista Suites on Deck 4, are a spacious 240 square feet, though they lack a private veranda. All of the other suites have verandas and range from 295 square feet to the one-bedroom Royal Suite, with 1,031 square feet, and the one-bedroom Grand Suite, with an impressive 1,314 square feet. Non-balcony rooms have huge picture windows.

The cabin decor is easy on the eye with lots of pastel shades and good artwork on the walls. Stateroom refrigerators are stocked with soft drinks and liquor. Two cabins on each ship are accessible for travelers with disabilities.

PUBLIC AREAS Public areas are small, as one might expect on a ship this size, but are consequently more intimate and more likely to lead to new friendships. One of the great gathering places on this ship is the midship's bar, a well laid-out, relaxing place to mingle and meet. The Observation Lounge, up top, is also inviting.

ALTERNATIVE DINING The Terrace Café offers theme dinners on a reservations-only basis, for no extra charge. Saletta is the reservations-only option, set in a separate room next to the main restaurant.

POOL, FITNESS & SPA FACILITIES The facilities are small, but they include just about everything you would want on a cruise. The pool is modest in size—about 30-feet long—and the ship has two Jacuzzis, men's and women's saunas, massage, hydrotherapy treatments, and aerobics classes. There's also a small jogging track. The beauty shop and salon offer manicures, pedicures, facials, and hair styling.

Silver Whisper

The Verdict

For space and comfort, service and cuisine, this ship, the newest in the fleet, is hard to beat.



Silver Whisper *(photo: Silversea)*

Specifications

Size (in tons)	28,258	Officers	Italian
Number of Cabins	194	Crew	295 (Int'l)
Number of Outside Cabins	194	Passenger/Crew Ratio	1.31 to 1
Cabins with Verandas	168	Year Built	2001
Number of Passengers	382	Last Major Refurbishment	N/A

Frommer's Ratings (Scale of 1–5)

Cabin Comfort and Amenities	5	Pool, Fitness & Spa Facilities	4
Ship Cleanliness and Maintenance	5	Children's Facilities	N/A
Public Comfort/Space	5	Decor	4

This vessel is like the *Silver Cloud* and the *Silver Wind,* only slightly bigger. It's a little longer and wider and carries more passengers, and outweighs its siblings by more than 11,000 tons.

There is one statistic that is of major interest to cruise aficionados. The *Whisper's* passenger/space ratio—a measurement of the vessel's interior space divided by the number of passengers—is a whopping 74, one of the highest in the industry and almost a full eight points higher than even those of the spacious *Silver Cloud.*

Cabins & Rates

Cabins	Brochure Rates	Bathtub	Fridge	Hair Dryer	Sitting Area	TV
Suites	$4,995–$15,295	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

CABINS Of course the excellent Silversea standard applies: All cabins are suites and all are outside. The smallest—a handful of them on the two lowest passenger decks—have no verandas but they're plenty spacious at 278 square feet. From there, the suite sizes only get better and better. The next—with verandas—go to 345 square feet rising all the way up to the top accommodations, the Grand Suites, at anything from 1,286 to 1,435 square feet.

All suites have convertible twin-to-queen beds, walk-in closet, writing desk, sitting area, and dressing table with hair dryer. They have Italian marble bathrooms, double vanity basins, tubs and showers, entertainment center with satellite TV and VCR with remote control, safe, and refrigerator/minibar. Nothing is left to chance. Nothing has been overlooked.

The biggest suites (some of them with two bedrooms) have guest powder rooms, flat-screen TV, dining area, CD stereo system, and so on. Get the message?

PUBLIC AREAS The bi-level Athenian Show Lounge is clearly a step up from that type of room on the *Silver Cloud* and *Silver Wind.* Although the area is not huge, the performances and the staging are splendid, given what they have to work with.

An innovation for Silversea is a small (24-person) champagne and wine bar and an even smaller cigar club, The Humidor. The Panorama Lounge has a nice dance floor, and with windows on three sides is a nice place to hang out during the day. The small casino offers the usual menu of money-speculating opportunities—blackjack, roulette, craps, and slots. You can have a drink in the casino, and there's another, bigger bar called The Bar (who thinks up these names?).

ALTERNATIVE DINING At night, the Lido dining area turns into the Terrace Café and offers special menus based on a theme (French, Asian, and so on), on a reservations-only basis. There is no extra charge. Seating just 40 diners, the new Le Champagne restaurant features dishes from Joachim Koerper (a two-star Michelin chef), such as sea bass with Mediterranean pesto and olive-crusted rack of lamb. There is no extra charge for the food, but guests do have to pay for the suggested pairing of wines if they want them.

POOL, SPA & FITNESS FACILITIES More than 50% larger than the facilities on the *Silver Cloud* and *Silver Wind,* those on the *Silver Whisper* include just about everything you would want on a cruise. The Mandara Spa (now owned by Steiner) offers a range of hydrotherapy, massage and beauty treatments, men's and ladies' sauna and steam rooms, and two whirlpool baths. The pool is surprisingly large for a ship of this size. For fitness buffs there are aerobics classes and a small jogging track. The beauty salon and barber shop offer manicures, pedicures, and facials, as well as hairstyling.

7 Windstar Cruises

SHIPS IN EUROPE Wind Spirit • Wind Surf

300 Elliott Ave. W., Seattle, WA 98119. ✆ **800/258-7245** or 206/281-3535. Fax 206/281-0627. www.windstarcruises.com.

Windstar offers a truly unique cruise experience. In addition to giving passengers the delicious illusion of adventure on board its fleet of four- and five-masted sailing ships, they supply the ever-pleasant reality of first-class cuisine, service, and itineraries. This is no barefoot, rigging-pulling, paper-plates-in-lap, sleep-on-the-deck kind of cruise, but a refined yet down-to-earth, yachtlike experience for a sophisticated, well-traveled crowd who despises big ships and throngs of tourists. Still, this is not as luxurious an experience as that on SeaDream Yacht.

On board, fine stained teak, brass details, and lots of navy-blue fabrics and carpeting lend a traditional nautical ambience. While the ships' proud masts and yards of white sails cut an ever-so-attractive profile, the vessels are ultra-state-of-the-art and the sails can be furled or unfurled at the touch of a button. The ships are so stable that at times the bridge may actually induce a modest tilt so passengers remember they're on a sailing ship. Under full sail, the calm tranquility of the cruises is utterly blissful.

Pros

- **Fine cuisine.** The ambience, service, and imaginative cuisine created by renowned Los Angeles chef Joachim Splichal is superb. Meals are looked forward to each day. Seating is open, and guests can usually get a table for two.
- **Informal and unregimented days.** This line offers the most casual high-end cruise out there—an approach much loved by passengers who like fine service and cuisine but don't like the formality and stuffiness of the majority of high-end lines. It's the most unregimented experience in a class of cruising already known for its unregimented atmosphere.
- **Unusual itineraries.** Besides 1 day at sea (on most routes), these small ships visit a port every day of a week-long cruise, and many of the ports visited are less touristy than those visited on the megaship routes.

Cons

- **No verandas.** If they're important to you, you're out of luck.
- **Limited activities and entertainment.** This is intentional, but if you need lots of organized hoopla to keep you happy, you won't find much on these ships.

Compared with other Luxury lines, here's how Windstar rates:

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Outstanding
Enjoyment Factor					✓
Dining					✓
Activities		✓			
Children's Program	N/A				
Entertainment		✓			
Service				✓	
Overall Value				✓	

THE FLEET

Today, Windstar's fleet consists of three ships, the 148-passenger ***Wind Star*** and ***Wind Spirit,*** constructed for Windstar and built in 1987 and 1988, respectively; and the 312-passenger ***Wind Surf,*** built in 1990 and sailed until 1997 as the *Club Med I* for Club Med Cruises. The *Wind Surf* is the only one of the Windstar ships to have a spa and to offer a substantial number of suites (31). The *Wind Star* cruises year-round in Tahiti, while the other ships spend summers in Europe and winters in the Caribbean.

PASSENGER PROFILE

People who expect high-caliber service and cuisine—but detest the formality of the other high-end ships and the mass-mentality of the megaships—are thrilled with Windstar. Most passengers are couples in their 30s to early 60s (pretty evenly distributed across this range, with the average age about 48), with a smattering of parents with adult children and the occasional single friends traveling together. The line is not the best choice for families with children under 15 or 16.

Overall, passengers are sophisticated, well traveled, and more down-to-earth than passengers on the other high-end lines. Most want something different from the regular cruise experience, and eschew the "bigger is better" philosophy of conventional cruising. These cruises are for those seeking a romantic escape, who like to visit European ports not bombarded by regular cruise ships, including Portofino and Messina, Italy, and Bodrum, Turkey.

About a quarter of all passengers have sailed with the line before, a figure that represents one of the best recommendations for Windstar, and about 20% are first-timers. There are often a few honeymooners on board. Windstar is an excellent choice for newlyweds, and was in fact voted as the top honeymoon choice on the "Today Show Throws a Wedding" series in 2001. To help romantics plan their trips, the cruise line in 2003 launched a special website, www.romanceundersail.com. Here you can find **special romantic shore excursions** designed for couples, contact a romance coordinator (who can help organize weddings and vow renewal ceremonies among other things), and learn about special services and amenities designed to add to your romantic experience on Windstar.

DINING

A high point of the cruise, the cuisine is among the better prepared aboard any ship in Europe, although maybe not quite the caliber of Seabourn, Seven Seas, or Silversea.

The line's cuisine was the creation of the renowned chef/restaurateur **Joachim Splichal,** winner of many culinary awards (in 2003 he was named Restaurateur of the Year by Bon Appétit magazine) and owner of Los Angeles's Patina Restaurant and Pinot Bistro. At its best, Splichal's food is inventive and imaginative, as reflected by such appetizers as a corn risotto with wild mushrooms and basil, or a "Farinetta" bread and Parmesan griddle cake with roasted chicken and shallots. Entrees might include a seafood strudel, or an artfully presented potato-crusted fish with braised leeks and apple-smoked bacon. Desserts such as banana pie with raspberry sauce and French profiteroles with hot fudge sauce are beyond tempting. A very good wine list includes California and European vintages.

Called the "Sail Light Menu," **healthy choices** and **vegetarian dishes,** designed by light-cooking expert Jeanne Jones, are available for breakfast, lunch, and dinner (fat and calorie content are listed on the menu).

The once-a-week **evening barbecues** on the pool deck are wonderful parties under the stars. Ample and beautifully designed, the buffet spread offers more than you could possibly sample in one evening. The setting is sublime, with tables set with linens and, often, live music.

Each ship has **two dining rooms,** one casual and breezy and used during breakfast and lunch (The Veranda), and the other a more formal room (The Restaurant) that's the stage for dinner. On the *Wind Spirit,* The Veranda is a sunny, window-lined room whose tables extend from inside onto a covered deck (unfortunately, you do have to go outside on deck to get there, so if it's raining you get wet), while The Restaurant is enclosed and accented with nautical touches like teakwood paneling and pillars wrapped decoratively in hemp rope.

At breakfast and lunch, meals can be ordered from a menu or selected from a buffet, so your choices are many. Made-to-taste omelets and a generous spread of fruits are available at breakfast, and luncheons may feature a tasty seafood paella and a hot pasta dish of the day. There is **open seating for meals,** at tables designed for between two and eight diners. You can often get a table for two, but you might have to wait if you go during the rush.

Windstar's official dress code is "no jackets required," which is a big draw for guests. In The Restaurant, guests are asked to dress "casually elegant," which generally means trousers and nice collared shirts for men and pantsuits or casual dresses for women.

The **24-hour room service** includes hot and cold breakfast items (cereals and breads as well as eggs and omelets) and a limited menu of sandwiches, fruit, pizza, salads, and other snacks.

The *Wind Surf* also has an **alternative dining venue,** The Bistro, open evenings on a reservations-only basis. Here you might start off with Thai soup, followed by Caesar salad and an entree of seared scallops with red wine sauce. Dessert might be crème brûlée.

ACTIVITIES

Since these ships generally visit a port of call every day of the cruise and guests spend the day on shore exploring, there are few organized activities offered—the way guests prefer it. Weather and conditions permitting, the ships anchor and passengers can enjoy complimentary kayaking, sailing, windsurfing, banana-boat rides, and swimming from the **watersports platform** lowered at the stern. Optional scuba dives are offered in some locales (including Calvi and Corsica) for an additional charge. There will be a handful of scheduled diversions, such as gaming lessons in the casino and walk-a-mile sessions and stretch classes on deck. Chances are there may be a vegetable carving or food decorating demonstration poolside, as well as clothing or jewelry sale items on display by the pool. Before ports, brief orientation talks are held.

The pool deck, with its hot tub, deck chairs, and open-air bar, is conducive to sunbathing, conversations with shipmates, or quiet repose. There's an extensive video library and CD collection from which passengers can borrow for use in their cabins.

Value Special Savings

Look for free airfare offers plus substantial early booking discounts from Windstar.

Windstar Fleet Itineraries

Ship	Home Ports & Season	Itinerary
Wind Spirit	**7-day Greek Isles,** Civitavecchia/Rome (Italy), Piraeus/Athens (Greece), and Istanbul (Turkey) (May–Oct)	**7-day Greek Isles:** Port calls may include Capri and Messina (Italy), Gythion, Navplion, Mykonos, Santorini, Rhodes, and Ermoupolis (Greece), Bodrum and Kusadasi (Turkey)
Wind Surf	**7-day Spain and Portugal,** Lisbon (Portugal) and Barcelona (Spain) (Apr, June, Aug, Nov); **6- to 8-day W. Med,** Barcelona (Spain), Nice (France), Civitavecchia/Rome (Italy), and Valletta (Malta) (Apr, May, July, Sept, Oct); **7-day Med,** Valletta (Malta) and Venice (Italy) (Oct); **12-day Northern Europe,** Dover (England) and Copenhagen (Denmark) (June, Aug); **7- to 13-day Baltic,** Copenhagen (Denmark) and St. Petersburg (Russia) (July); **10-day W. Med,** Lisbon (Portugal) and Dover (England) (June and Sept)	**7-day Spain and Portugal:** Port calls include Portimao (Portugal), Tangier (Morocco), Malaga, Ibiza, and Palma (Spain); **6- to 8-day W. Med:** Port calls may include Tarragona and Mahon (Spain), Porto Vendres, Marseille, Nice, Cannes, St. Florent, Sete, and Porquerolles (France), Monte Carlo (Monaco), St-Tropez (France), Portofino, Portovenere, Capri, Porto Empedocle, Sorrento, Lipari, Portoferraio, and Porto Vecchio (Italy), La Goulette (Tunisia), and Gozo (Malta); **7-day Med:** Port calls include Taormina (Italy), Cephalonia and Corfu (Greece), Dubrovnik and Hvar (Croatia); **12-day Northern Europe:** Port calls may include Zeebrugge (Belgium), Amsterdam (Netherlands), Leith, Invergordon and Kirkwall (Scotland), Stavanger and Oslo (Norway), and Arhus (Denmark); **7- to 13-day Baltic:** Port calls may include Rostock (Germany), Ventspils (Latvia), Tallinn (Estonia), St. Petersburg and Vyborg (Russia), Helsinki and Mariehamn (Finland), Bornholm (Denmark), Gydnia (Poland), Klaipeda (Lithuania), Visby and Stockholm (Sweden); **10-day W. Med:** Port calls include Le Havre, La Pallice, and St. Jean De Luz (France), Belle Isle (Northern Ireland), La Cornua and Villagarcia (Spain), and Leixoes (Portugal)

The company's **organized port tours** tend to be more creative than usual, and the cruise director/shore excursions manager/jack-of-all trades person or couple is knowledgeable and able to point passengers toward good spots for independent activities.

You can send and receive e-mails from an account set up on the ships for a rather steep $7.50 for outgoing messages and $5 for incoming messages. On the *Wind Surf* only you can also get on the Internet and check your account at home for 75¢ a minute.

CHILDREN'S PROGRAM

As children are not encouraged to sail with Windstar, there are no activities planned for them. There are often a handful of teenagers on board who spend time sunbathing or holed up in their cabins watching movies.

ENTERTAINMENT

For the most part, passengers entertain themselves. There's often a duo on board (a pianist and a vocalist) performing before and after dinner in the ships' one main lounge. **Local entertainment,** such as a Turkish dance troupe, is sometimes brought aboard at a port of call. A very modest **casino** offers slots, blackjack, and "Ocean stud poker" (which is Caribbean stud poker with a different name). After dinner, passengers often go up to the pool bar for a nightcap under the stars, and sometimes after 10 or 11pm, disco/pop music is played in the lounge if guests are in the dancing mood.

SERVICE

Windstar is a class operation, as reflected in its thoughtful service personnel. The staff smiles hello and makes every effort to learn passengers' names. Dining staff is efficient and first-rate as well, but not in that ultra-professional, five-star-hotel, ultra-luxury-ship kind of way. That's not what Windstar is all about. Officers and crew are helpful, but not gushing. It's common for several married couples to be among the crew.

Laundry service is available (no self-serve or dry cleaning).

Windstar operates under a "tipping not required" policy, although generally guests do tip staff as much as on other ships; on Windstar, like Holland America, there's just less pressure to do so.

Wind Spirit

The Verdict

This ship looks chic and offers just the right combination of creature comforts and first-class cuisine, along with a casual, unstructured ethic.



Wind Spirit *(photo: Windstar Cruises)*

Specifications

Size (in tons)	5,350	Officers	British/Dutch
Number of Cabins	74	Crew	89 (Int'l)
Number of Outside Cabins	74	Passenger/Crew Ratio	1.6 to 1
Cabins with Verandas	0	Year Built	1988
Number of Passengers	148	Last Major Refurbishment	2001

Frommer's Rating (Scale of 1–5)

Cabin Comfort & Amenities	5	Pool, Fitness & Spa Facilities	2
Ship Cleanliness & Maintenance	4	Children's Facilities	N/A
Public Comfort/Space	3	Decor	4

Despite the high-tech design and size—significantly larger than virtually any private yacht afloat—this ship nonetheless has some of the grace and lines of a clipper ship, with practically none of the associated discomforts. There's even a needle-shaped bowsprit jutting above the waves. Getting around is usually easy, except that there's no inside access to the breakfast and luncheon restaurant, so during high winds or rain, access via an external set of stairs can be moderately inconvenient.

Cabins & Rates

Cabins	Brochure Rates	Bathtub	Fridge	Hair Dryer	Sitting Area	TV
Outside	$5,030–$6,729	no	yes	yes	no	yes

CABINS All cabins are similar, with subtle nautical touches. They're roomy at 188 square feet, but nowhere near as large as your typical high-end ship suite. Beds can be adapted into either a one-queen-size or two-twin-size format. Each cabin has a VCR and TV showing CNN and lots of movies, a CD player, a minibar, a pair of large round portholes with brass fittings, bathrobes, fresh fruit, and a compact closet. Teakwood-decked bathrooms, largish for a ship of this size, are better laid out than those aboard many luxury cruise liners, and contain a hair dryer, plenty of towels, and more than adequate storage space. Like the ships' main public rooms, cabins have navy-blue fabrics and carpeting, along with wood tones—attractive but simple, well constructed, and utilitarian.

Although all the cabins are comfortable, cabins amidships are more stable in rough seas. Note that the ships' engines, when running at full speed, can be a bit noisy.

This line is not recommended for passengers with serious disabilities or those who are wheelchair bound. There are no elevators on board, access to piers is often by tender, and there are raised doorsills.

PUBLIC AREAS There aren't a lot of public areas, but they're more than adequate since the ship spends so much time visiting ports. The four main rooms include two restaurants, a library, and the vaguely nautical-looking lounge, with several cozy, somewhat private partitioned-off nooks and clusters of comfy caramel-colored leather chairs surrounding a sunken wooden dance floor. One corner has a bar; the other holds a piano and music equipment for the onboard entertainment duo. Here passengers congregate for port talks, pre- and post-dinner drinks, dancing, and any local dance performances. A second bar out on the pool deck attracts passengers for drinks under the stars. Cigars can also be purchased and smoked here.

The wood-paneled library manages to be both nautical and collegiate at the same time. Guests can read, play cards, or check out one of the hundreds of videotapes (CDs are available from the purser's office nearby).

The restaurant is elegant and dimly lit, while the Veranda breakfast and lunch restaurant is light and airy. Throughout the ship, large windows, locked and permanently closed, allow in plenty of light if not air.

ALTERNATIVE DINING None.

POOL, FITNESS & SPA FACILITIES The swimming pool is tiny, as you might expect aboard such a relatively small-scale ship, and there's an adjacent hot tub. The deck chairs around the pool can get filled during sunny days, but there's always the crescent-shaped slice of deck above and more space outside the Veranda restaurant. On Deck 4, there's an unobstructed wraparound deck for walkers.

There's a cramped gym in a cabin-size room, and an adjacent co-ed sauna. Massages and a few other types of treatments are available out of a single massage room next to the hair salon on Deck 1.

Wind Surf

The Verdict

This sleek, sexy, super-smooth sailing ship is a gem, offering an extensive spa along with an intimate yachtlike ambience.



Wind Surf *(photo: Windstar Cruises)*

Specifications

Size (in tons)	14,745	Officers	English/Dutch
Number of Cabins	156	Crew	163 (Int'l)
Number of Outside Cabins	156	Passenger/Crew Ratio	2 to 1
Cabins with Verandas	0	Year Built	1990
Number of Passengers	312	Last Major Refurbishment	2001

Frommer's Rating (Scale of 1–5)

Cabin Comfort & Amenities	5	Pool, Fitness & Spa Facilities	5
Ship Cleanliness & Maintenance	4	Children's Facilities	N/A
Public Comfort/Space	4	Decor	4

The newest member of the Windstar fleet of deluxe motor-sailers also delivers a top-of-the line cruise experience that's as chic and sophisticated as it is easygoing and unregimented. Previously sailing under the Club Med banner (it originally entered service as the *Club Med I*), the ship was designed by the same French architect who worked on the other three Windstar vessels, and for the most part is an enlarged copy of them. Purchased for $45 million and subsequently renamed, the *Wind Surf* underwent a major $8 million renovation in early 1998, which included an overhaul of all the public areas and the addition of 30 suites, a 10,000-square-foot spa complex, an alternative restaurant, and a casino.

As part of the conversion, many areas were gutted and all the grace notes of high-end life at sea were added to create a very elegant vessel. Despite a passenger capacity more than double her sister ships (312 versus 148), the *Wind Surf* still feels like a private yacht.

Cabins & Rates

Cabins	Brochure Rates	Bathtub	Fridge	Hair Dryer	Sitting Area	TV
Outside	$5,030–$5,220	no	yes	yes	no	yes
Suite	$7,728	no	yes	yes	yes	yes

CABINS Cabins are clones of those described in the *Wind Spirit,* above. The interiors of both suites and standard cabins feature generous use of burled maple and teak, bedspreads and curtains in navy-blue and beige color schemes (suites are maroon and beige), white laminated cabinetwork, and plentiful storage. All cabins have ocean views, and both standard cabins (188 sq. ft.) and suites

(376 sq. ft.) are well supplied with creature comforts, including terry-cloth robes, hair dryers, well-stocked minibars, safes, VCRs and CD players, and satellite TVs with CNN. Artfully designed, the bathrooms have teakwood trim and are more appealing than those aboard many other luxury cruise ships. Extra-spacious suites have separate sleeping and living quarters and his-and-her bathrooms (each with a shower and a toilet).

As part of *Wind Surf's* metamorphosis in 1998, cabins were completely reconfigured for a reduced passenger capacity of 312 instead of the Club Med's 386. In addition, 30 suites were added on Deck 3 (its original layout had only one), making the *Wind Surf* the only vessel in the Windstar fleet to offer suites.

The ship has two elevators (unlike the other ships in the Windstar fleet, which have none), but still is not recommended for people with serious mobility problems. Access to piers is often by tender, and ramps over doorsills are not adequate.

PUBLIC AREAS Because the *Wind Surf's* passenger-space ratio is 30% greater than that of its sister ships, its two main public spaces are also roomier. Bright and airy, the Wind Surf Lounge is where passengers gather in the evening for cocktails and to listen to a three- to five-person band. The Compass Rose piano bar is popular for after-dinner drinks. In addition, the pool bar is the place for a drink under the stars.

As on the other Windstar ships, breakfast and lunch are served in the glass-enclosed Veranda cafe topside. Dinner is served in The Restaurant, as well as an alternative dinner option—the smaller, 90-seat Bistro.

Unlike the other Windstar ships, *Wind Surf* has a 2,100-square-foot conference center that lies amidships and just below the waterline (a company spokesperson says about 25% of the *Wind Surf's* total business comes from charter and corporate incentive business; sometimes the whole ship is chartered, sometimes just half or less). Suitable for between 118 and 180 occupants, depending on the set-up, it contains technical amenities such as a photocopy machine and audiovisual equipment.

Other public areas include a casino that's nestled into one edge of the Windsurf Lounge, a library, and a gift shop.

ALTERNATIVE DINING The Bistro, located on the ship's top deck, offers Joachim Splichal's brand of cuisine in a contemporary Mediterranean bistro setting. Reservations are required, but there is no cover charge.

POOL, FITNESS & SPA FACILITIES The *Wind Surf* has the most elaborate fitness and spa facilities in the Windstar fleet (the line's two 148-passenger ships have no spa and a tiny gym). In fact, it outclasses facilities on other similar-size ships. There's a well-stocked windowed gym on the top deck, a "sports" pool for aqua-aerobics, and scuba diving for certified passengers (a resort course is offered for beginners). An aerobics room is also used for yoga and golf swing practice. The new Steiner-managed WindSpa offers exercise, massage, and beauty regimens that rival those available at many land-based spas. There's aromatherapy, a variety of massages and other treatments, a sauna, and a steam room. Spa packages—geared to both men and women—can be purchased in advance through your travel agent, with appointment times made once you're on board.

Besides the sports pool, there's another pool on the Main Deck as well as two hot tubs. For joggers, a full-circuit teak promenade wraps around the Bridge Deck.

8

The Alternative Lines

The ships in this chapter offer a much more personal experience than larger ships, carry fewer passengers than the big ships, and spend more time in port, which means you'll get to get off quicker and to know your destination better. The ships—some sailing ships and others motorized yachts—are small and intimate, many of them offering a measure of adventure mixed in with your sea voyage. Plus, these vessels are resolutely casual, meaning you can leave the jackets, ties, pumps, and pearls at home.

These ships generally visit a port every day, and because they have shallow drafts (the amount of the ship that rides below the waterline), they're able to sail to small, out-of-the-way ports that the big cruise ships would run aground trying to approach. There is generally little time spent at sea, with the emphasis on giving the maximum time possible in each port.

Passengers tend to be well-traveled people who like to learn and explore, and care little about plush amenities and onboard activities of the bingo and horse-racing variety. Don't expect doting service, but do expect very personal attention, as crew and passengers get friendly fast. Also, because there are so few passengers aboard (110–228, rather than 1,200–2,600), you'll get to know your fellow shipmates better—it's not uncommon for people on these ships to make friends and plan follow-up trips together.

The ships in this chapter are more like private yachts or summer camps at sea than floating resorts. You'll have fun, make lots of new friends, and be able to let your hair down. Food will be basic, hearty, and plentiful, but don't count on room service and midnight buffets, because there may not be any. There may not be TVs in the cabins, and you won't find a casino.

These ships do not have elevators or cabins accessible to travelers with disabilities, and are therefore not a good choice for travelers in wheelchairs or others who would have problems walking up and down stairs a lot.

DRESS CODES Dress code? What's a dress code? Aboard most of the ships in this chapter you can get away with a shirt and shorts during the day and a polo shirt and pants at night (sundresses for ladies).

Cruise Lines Reviewed in this Chapter

- Clipper Cruise Line
- Lindblad Expeditions
- Star Clippers

1 Clipper Cruise Line

SHIPS IN EUROPE Clipper Adventurer

Intrav Building, 11969 Westline Dr., St. Louis, MO 63146-3220 ✆ **800/325-0010** or 314/727-2929. Fax 314/727-6576. www.clippercruise.com.

Clipper, an American-owned line, is highly experienced in offering expedition-style and destination-oriented cruises in an intimate seagoing setting with a top-notch enrichment program. It's a small-ship operator carrying mostly American passengers who enjoy each other's company and who get along well with the ships' youngish crews. The European programs are destination-driven, with a good enrichment program that includes well-attended informal lectures. Company-wide, there are no in-cabin TVs.

A very shippy ship, the *Clipper Adventurer*—built in 1975 as the *Alla Tarasova* and converted into a cruise ship by Scandinavian craftsmen in 1997 to 1998—has an ice-hardened hull that allows it to follow exotic itineraries in the Arctic and Antarctic as well as its European sailings. At 4,575 tons, it's still a small ship, but it offers more public areas than most and an almost astounding amount of open deck space, considering the ship carries only 122 passengers. There are quiet areas throughout where passengers can go off on their own, plus places to congregate when one feels the urge to be social.

The *Clipper Adventurer*'s shore program is more ambitious and active than aboard the company's U.S.-flag coastal vessels, and the ship's shallow draft and nimble nature allow the captain to enter some very tight harbors and include a wider range of seldom-visited ports.

Pros

- **An intimate seagoing club.** The onboard atmosphere is informal, and camaraderie between passengers, staff, and crew comes easily.
- **Cozy, small-hotel-style public rooms.** From the comfy forward observation lounge to the bar amidships and cozy library one deck above, this is a fine ship on which to spend 2 weeks.
- **Serious enrichment program.** Clipper prides itself in hiring guest lecturers who enjoy sharing their knowledge, experience, and time with passengers.

Cons

- **Ship bucks in choppy seas.** The ship is small and is subject to considerable movement in large swells and stormy seas, though side-to-side rolling is minimized by stabilizers.

Compared with other Alternative lines, here's how Clipper rates:

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Outstanding
Enjoyment Factor				✓	
Dining				✓	
Activities				✓	
Children's Program	N/A				
Entertainment			✓		
Service				✓	
Overall Value				✓	

Tips on Tipping

Tipping on small ships is a little different than on big ships. Gratuities are often pooled among the crew, and may not be the same amounts as recommended on big ships. Below is a rundown of suggested tips, based on per passenger, per day. Keep in mind these are just suggestions (tipping is always at your own discretion).

- **Clipper:** $10, pooled, plus tips to bartenders at your discretion.
- **Lindblad Expeditions:** $12, pooled.
- **Star Clippers:** $8 to $10, pooled.

THE FLEET

The company began operating small U.S.-flag coastal cruise ships in 1983 on itineraries in North and Central America. For several years Clipper chartered Society Expeditions' 138-passenger *World Discoverer.* In 1997 the company bought its own expedition ship, the Russian-flag *Alla Tarasova,* which it rebuilt into a 122-passenger expedition ship with American standards and renamed ***Clipper Adventurer.*** In 1999, Clipper took on the similar-size *Oceanic Odyssey,* which the company renamed the *Clipper Odyssey* and deployed for cruises in Asia and Australia, New Zealand, and Asia. The U.S.-flag fleet of two coastal vessels (*Yorktown Clipper* and *Nantucket Clipper*) carries an American crew while the two oceangoing expedition vessels have American and international crews.

PASSENGER PROFILE

Clipper's passengers are mostly mature Americans who have traveled quite a lot but are not risk-takers and prefer the intimacy of small ships with American management. The European programs attract a wider age range and more active passengers than do the U.S.-flag coastal ships. The passengers are not status-seeking but rather easygoing types who enjoy the company of like-minded travelers. Children are generally not part of the passenger profile, though those who enjoy adult company are likely to have a good time.

DINING

All Clipper chefs have been trained at the Culinary Institute of America at Hyde Park, New York, and they cater to American passengers who like well-prepared (but not overly rich) food, attractively presented and using top ingredients, rather than overly abundant or showy displays.

In Europe, where food supplies are varied, the menus will feature fresh, local ingredients prepared in a sophisticated style. Steaks and roast beef will be top quality, and the seafood dishes will run to Atlantic salmon, sea bass, and lobster tails. Salads change daily, and all the breads, pastries, and desserts are freshly prepared on board.

The dining room, with large picture windows, operates with a single seating for all meals, and there are tables for mostly four and six, none far from a good view. The dining staff is American and Filipino, and at peak times during dinner there can be some delays as the serving kitchen is much too small.

The **buffet offerings** for breakfast and lunch are displayed in the observation lounge, and they are limited to continental breakfast items and soup, salads, and sandwiches at lunch, with an occasional hot entree.

Vegetarians and others following special diets can be accommodated with advance notice.

Clipper Fleet Itineraries

Ship	Home Ports & Season	Itinerary
Clipper Adventurer	**10-day W. Med,** Lisbon (Portugal), Civitavecchia/Rome (Italy) (Apr, May); **8-day Spain and Portugal,** Lisbon (Portugal) (May); **10- or 11-day France*,** Bordeaux, Roeun, Calais (France) (May, June); **11-day Ireland*,** Calais (France) (June); **11-day British Isles,** Greenock (U.K.), (June, July)	**10-day W. Med:** Port calls include Portimao (Portugal), Malaga, Barcelona, and Roses (Spain), Marseille (France), Monte Carlo (Monaco), and Portofino and Viareggio (Italy); **8-day Spain and Portugal:** Port calls include Leixoes (Portugal), Villagarcia, Santander, Bilbao, and San Sebastian (Spain), and St-Jean de Luz (France); **10- or 11-day France:** Port calls may include Ile-d-Aix, La Pallice, Cherbourg, Mont St-Michel, Belle Isle, Calais, Dunkerque, Caen, and Honfleur (France), and St. Malo, Portsmouth, and St. Peter Port (U.K.); **11-day Ireland:** Port calls include Honfleur (France), St. Malo, Penzance, and Tresco (U.K.), Glengarrif, Dingle, Limerick, Galway, Innishmore, Clifden, Innishmurray, Raithlin Isle, and Tory Island (Ireland), and Portrush (Northern Ireland); **11-day British Isles:** Port calls include Isle of Iona (Scotland), Isle of Man, Fishguard, Pembroke, and Holyhead (Wales), and Waterford (Ireland)

** Sold as a cruisetour with 1 or 2 hotel nights.*

ACTIVITIES

Onboard activities are limited to daytime **lectures** by naturalists and historians at sea, and games and puzzles in the library. There is an excellent reference book collection, and passengers display considerable interest in educating themselves. Extensive reference material is sent to passengers before each cruise so they can read up on the destinations in advance. The captain has an open-bridge policy at all times, and talking with the officers is an integral part of life aboard the *Clipper Adventurer* day and night. Swimming and snorkeling are sometimes offered off the sides of the ship. You can send and receive e-mail through the ship's radio officer for $4 for the first page, and $1 for every kilobyte (1,000 characters) after that.

CHILDREN'S PROGRAM

There are no special programs for children, but if there are a few aboard, the lecture staff will see that they have a good time, especially on trips ashore. However, children need to enjoy adult company to enjoy this ship.

ENTERTAINMENT

The only entertainment would be local groups coming aboard in a few ports and destination-related films screened in the lounge after dinner. The ship does not have a casino or regular after-dinner shows.

SERVICE

The hotel staff is American and Filipino with Americans as the bar crew and some of the dining crew. The cabin stewardesses are Filipino. Service is polite and low-key, though some of the older passengers will bond with some of the younger crew and, at the end of the cruise, will want to adopt them.

Bar service in the main lounge, the social center, is very personal, and after a few days, the bartenders will remember what regulars like to drink.

You may send out laundry for the crew to do, but there is no self-service Laundromat, and there is no dry cleaning.

Clipper Adventurer

The Verdict

A well-received addition to the expedition scene, the ship has rapidly gained a top reputation among cruisers who want a well-run, destination-oriented experience in their own language and with like-minded passengers.



Clipper Adventurer *(photo: Clipper Cruise Line)*

Specifications

Size (in tons)	4,575	Officers	Scandin. & Filipino
Number of Cabins	61	Crew	58 (American & Filipino)
Number of Outside Cabins	61	Passenger/Crew Ratio	2.1 to 1
Cabins with Verandas	none	Year Built	1975 (rebuilt 1998)
Number of Passengers	122	Last Major Refurbishment	1998

Frommer's Ratings (Scale of 1–5)

Cabin Comfort & Amenities	4	Pool, Fitness & Spa Facilities	2
Ship Cleanliness & Maintenance	5	Children's Facilities	N/A
Public Comfort/Space	5	Decor	4

The *Clipper Adventurer* is an ideal-size ship for exploring the smaller ports in Europe without taking the masses with you. She is comfortable in a clubby way and was designed from scratch to appeal to homey Americans who would like to visit interesting places in an informal atmosphere.

Cabins & Rates

Cabins	Brochure Rates*	Bathtub	Fridge	Hair Dryer	Sitting Area	TV
Outside	$2,870–$4,330	no	no	no	no	no
Suites	$4,830–$5,330	yes	yes	no	yes	no

**Rates are based on 8-day itinerary*

CABINS All cabins are outside, and the nine on the Promenade Deck look through two sets of glass to the sea, while those on the A Deck have portholes. Most cabins are of average size, all with twin beds, showers, toilets, decent storage space in closets and on shelves and flat surfaces, and phones. They are designed for sleeping and resting between trips ashore, are plainly furnished with a chair and vanity-cum-desk, and have attractive wood-grain wainscoting and trim. One deluxe cabin and three suites are clustered on the Boat Deck in a private section. Soundproofing throughout is good.

The cabins on the Promenade Deck, while roomy, look onto the narrow side promenade that is lighted at night, meaning that curtains must be drawn after dark and especially when sleeping. During the day there is little traffic.

PUBLIC AREAS The ship has three main public rooms, plus the bridge, which is open 24 hours a day. The forward lounge slopes upwards with the ship's shear and can seat all passengers at once. The lectures and films take place here, plus continental breakfast and light lunch buffets. Though very comfy, the room suffers from being dark unless you are seated next to a window. Aft is a clubby lounge bar that sees little use except for card players or for a brief private chat. The library is the best of the lot, a cheerful space with a lighter atmosphere and away from any through foot traffic, of which there is very little on this ship. Passengers use the library for reading, research, games, and having coffee or a cold drink.

The dining room, located well aft on the Promenade Deck, is most attractive when you're seated next to a window; in the center it's slightly gloomy. The best tables are a pair with four places all the way aft. If something worth seeing suddenly appears outside, two doors allow passengers access directly onto the afterdeck.

Outside space includes a wide Boat Deck with deck chairs and a covered after section, but it is not possible to walk around this deck on one level. Forward of the bridge, there is a step down to an observation deck constructed as the deck roof to the extended lounge below. On the ship's more expeditionary itineraries, "Thar she blows" will bring scores to this open space, as will the sighting of an iceberg, but for most, the view forward is enjoyed from the bridge.

The very highest deck is wide open for sunning, something not done much on this ship. The forward staircase foyers exhibit some very attractive sculpture and artwork. The ship is entirely nonsmoking within.

ALTERNATIVE DINING None.

POOL, FITNESS & SPA FACILITIES The tiny gym has weights, a treadmill, and stationary bicycle, and adjacent is a sauna. There is no swimming pool or whirlpool.

2 Lindblad Expeditions

SHIPS IN EUROPE Endeavour

720 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10019. ✆ **800/EXPEDITION** or 212/765-7740; www.expeditions.com.

Lindblad Expeditions offers soft-adventure/educational cruises that transport passengers to places of natural beauty and compelling history away from the crowded tourist stops.

Company founder, Sven Olof Lindblad, son of legendary expedition travel pioneer Lars Erik Lindblad, is a long-time advocate of environmentally responsible tourism, and Lindblad Expeditions' crew and staff emphasize respect for the local ecosystem in their talks with cruise passengers. A Lindblad cruise is built around frequent excursions off the ship on Zodiac landing craft that enable passengers to get off almost anywhere at a moment's notice. Flexibility and spontaneity are keys to the experience as the route may be altered at any time to follow a pod of whales or school of dolphins. There are usually two or three excursions every day (included in the cruise fare).

Camaraderie develops between passengers through participation in excursions and through sharing their experiences at lively recap sessions every evening before dinner. These sessions feature presentations by expert naturalists and historians who both share their knowledge of a particular region and act as guides on shore excursions.

Pros

- **Great expedition feeling.** Innovative, flexible itineraries, outstanding lecturers/guides, casual dress policy, and a friendly, accommodating staff help make the *Endeavour* one of the top expedition vessels sailing today.
- **Excursions included.** All shore excursions are included in the cruise fare.
- **Few passengers.** Due to the small number of passengers, everyone can get on and off the Zodiacs with minimal waiting.

Cons

- **Small cabins.** While most passengers don't seem to mind their cramped quarters, the spartan, no-frills cabins are far from the most comfortable at sea.
- **Not much entertainment.** There is little to do in the evenings, and most passengers turn in after dinner to rest up for the next day's explorations.

Compared with other Alternative lines, here's how Lindblad rates:

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Outstanding
Enjoyment Factor				✓	
Dining			✓		
Activities				✓	
Children's Program	N/A				
Entertainment	N/A				
Service			✓		
Overall Value				✓	

Lindblad Expeditions Fleet Itineraries

Ship	Home Ports & Season	Itinerary
Endeavour	**14-day British Isles,** London (U.K.) (May, June); **9-day Norway,** Longyearvyen (Norway) (July); **14-day Norway,** Bergen, Long-yearvyen (Norway) (June, Aug); **18-day Baltics,** Bergen (Norway) (Aug); **16-day France/W. Med,** London (U.K.), Seville (Spain) (May, Sept)	**14-day British Isles:** Port calls include Darmouth, Whitby, and Holy Island (U.K.), Isles of Scilly, Cobh and Dublin (Ireland), Holyhead (Wales), Iona Islands, Hebrides, Outer Hebrides, Orkney Islands, and Edinburgh (Scotland); **9-day Norway*:** Port calls include Svalbard; **14-day Norway*:** Port calls include Nordfjordenthe Lofoten Islands, Tysfjorden, Tromso, Bear Island, and Svalbard (Norway); **18-day Baltics:** Port calls include Skagen, Copenhagen, Christianso, and Bornholm Islands (Denmark), Visby and Stockholm (Sweden), Mariehamn (Finland), St. Petersburg (Russia), Tallinn (Estonia), Riga (Latvia), Gdansk (Poland), Amsterdam (Netherlands); **16-day France/W. Med*:** Port calls include Osstend (Belgium), Honfleur, Ile d'Aix, La Rochelle, Bordeaux, La Cote Basque, and Normandy (France), St. Malo (U.K.), Bilbao, La Coruna, and Cadiz (Spain), and Oporto, Lisbon, and Portimao (Portugal)

**Includes overnight at a hotel.*

THE FLEET

The largest ship in the Lindblad Expeditions fleet, the 110-passenger ***Endeavour*** (formerly *Caledonian Star*), is a former North Sea trawler that was completely rebuilt for expedition cruising in 1990. It is the only Lindblad Expeditions ship with stabilizers. In 1998, its cabins and public areas were treated to a $3 million renovation.

PASSENGER PROFILE

Lindblad Expeditions tends to attract well-traveled and well-educated professional couples 55+ who have "been there, done that" and are looking for something completely different in a cruise experience. The passenger mix may also include some singles, a few honeymooners, and a smattering of younger couples. There is often a substantial contingent of British passengers on European itineraries. While not necessarily frequent cruisers, many passengers are likely to have been on other Lindblad programs (land and/or cruise). They tend to share common interest in wildlife (whale-watching, bird-watching) and are also intellectually curious about the culture and history of the regions they're visiting.

A Lindblad Expeditions cruise will not appeal to couch potatoes and other sedentary types expecting a big ship lineup of fun and games.

DINING

Hearty buffet breakfasts and lunches and sit-down dinners feature a good choice of both hot and cold dishes with plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables. Many of the fresh ingredients are obtained from ports along the way, and meals may reflect regional tastes. Another plus is the selection of freshly baked breads, pastries, and cakes.

While far from haute cuisine, dinners are well prepared and presented; varied menus feature primarily Continental cuisine with a choice of fish and meat entrees. All meals are served at single open seatings that allow passengers to get to know each other by moving around to different tables. Lecturers and other staff members also dine with passengers.

ACTIVITIES

During the day most activity takes place off the ship on Zodiac and/or land excursions. The ship's fleet of kayaks is available to passengers who wish to explore shoreside locations on their own. Thanks to an Undersea Program, passengers can hear live vocalizations from whales (via a hydrophone) or watch (thanks to underwater filming) a penguin swimming below the sea. The program includes a full-time Undersea Specialist on board who oversees activities, as well as a Video Chronicler who captures daily events (copies of the video are for sale at the end of the trip for about $50 or more, depending on the length of the cruise). While on board, passengers entertain themselves with a good book or a game of bridge, Scrabble, or Trivial Pursuit (the ships carry a good selection of board games). E-mail is available for a charge of $4 for the first kilobyte of text sent (1,000 characters), and $1 for each additional kilobyte. There is no charge for incoming e-mail. Some cruises are designated as Photo Expeditions and feature expert assistance and instruction from professional photographers, as well as special photo walks and talks on the creative and technical aspects of photography.

CHILDREN'S PROGRAM

There are no organized programs, as there are few children aboard.

ENTERTAINMENT

Lectures and slide presentations are scheduled throughout the cruise and documentaries or movies may be screened in the evening in the main lounge. Extensive reading material is available in the well-stocked library.

SERVICE

Dining room staff and room stewards are affable and efficient and seem to enjoy their work. Recommended tips of $8 to $10 per person per day are pooled and divided among the staff. There's no room service unless you are ill and unable to make it to the dining room.

Endeavour

The Verdict

Well-run expedition ship with terrific staff and unique itineraries provides one of the richest overall cruise experiences available today.



Endeavour *(photo: Lindblad Expeditions)*

Specifications

Size (in tons)	3,132	Officers	Scandinavian
Number of Cabins	62	Crew	Int'l
Number of Outside Cabins	62	Passenger/Crew Ratio	2 to 1
Cabins with Verandas	0	Year Built	1966 (rebuilt 1990)
Number of Passengers	110	Last Major Renovation	1998

Frommer's Ratings (Scale of 1–5)

Cabin Comfort & Amenities	3	Pool, Fitness & Spa Facilities	2
Ship Cleanliness & Maintenance	3	Children's Facilities	N/A
Public Comfort/Space	3	Decor	2

While far from a luxury liner, the newly renamed *Endeavour* (Lindblad Expeditions previously called the vessel *Caledonian Star*) is a solid, sturdy, fully stabilized vessel with a long track record of success as a pacesetter in expedition cruising. After a recent renovation, which included reinforcing the hull, the ship is more shipshape than ever before as it sails year-round on an ambitious schedule of itineraries from the North Cape of Norway to the British Isles and the Mediterranean (Europe) to the fjords of Chile and the white continent of Antarctica.

Cabins & Rates

Cabins	Brochure Rates*	Bathtub	Fridge	Hair Dryer	Sitting Area	TV
Outside	$4,690–$6,140	no	no	yes	no	no
Suites	$8,390	no	yes	yes	yes	yes

**For 9-day Norway; rates include all shore excursions and a pre-cruise hotel night.*

CABINS All cabins are outside and located above the waterline with a total of 46 double cabins, 14 single cabins, and two suites. There are five price categories ranging from Category 1 cabins on the lower deck to two suites on the upper deck. Cabins in categories 1 to 4 are simply furnished with two lower beds, a writing desk with chair, toilet/shower, and either a porthole or windows for outside lighting. Single cabins have one lower bed. The suites are the only accommodations with separate sitting and sleeping areas and large-view windows.

Pack judiciously as there is minimal storage space except in the two suites.

PUBLIC AREAS The two largest public spaces are the main lounge/bar and the spacious dining room. There are also a small swimming pool and fitness room plus a library, gift shop, hair salon, laundry, and small medical facility with a full-time doctor. The navigation bridge is open to passengers.

ALTERNATIVE DINING None.

POOL, FITNESS & SPA FACILITIES There are no spa facilities and only a tiny, postage stamp–size pool and small exercise room.

3 Star Clippers

SHIPS IN EUROPE Royal Clipper • Star Clipper • Star Flyer

4101 Salzedo St., Coral Gables, FL 33146. ✆ **800/442-0553** or 305/442-0550. Fax 305/442-1611. www.star-clippers.com.

With the sails and rigging of classic clipper ships and surprisingly nice amenities, a cruise on this line's ships offers adventure with comfort.

On Star Clippers, you'll have the better of two worlds. On one hand, these cruises espouse an unstructured, let-your-hair-down, hands-on ethic—you can climb the masts (with a harness, of course), pull in the sails, crawl into the bow netting, or chat with the captain on the bridge, and generally pretend you are Errol Flynn (even if you're not wearing a billowing shirt with a sword tucked in your belt). On the other hand, the ship offers comfortable, almost cushy public rooms and cabins; you'll think you're on a private yacht.

On board, passengers are reminded they are on a real working ship, whether they're leaning against railings just feet above the sea, watching sailors climb the masts, or seeing the captain navigate from the open-air bridge. Listening to the captain's daily talk about the history of sailing, knot-tying, or some other nautical subject from his forward perch on the Sun Deck, you'll feel like you're exploring Europe's seas and ports in a ship that belongs there. In today's world of look-alike megaships, the twins *Star Clipper* and *Star Flyer* and slightly larger *Royal Clipper* stand out, recalling a romantic, swashbuckling era of ship travel.

Pros

- **Hands-on experience.** While you don't have to do a darned thing if you don't want to, you're free to help pull in the sails or even climb the masts (wearing a harness and with much assistance from the crew, of course).
- **Rich in atmosphere.** On these wood-bound clipper ships, it's a real treat to just wallow in the ambience.
- **Off-beat itineraries.** In concert with popular, must-see ports, the ships visit more offbeat places like Lipari, Italy, and Patmos, Greece.

Cons

- **Rolling.** Even though the ships have stabilizers and ballast tanks to reduce rolling, you'll feel the motion if you run into rough seas, as is the case with any small ship.
- **Few activities.** Don't expect nonstop action. Most passengers are content to explore ports, partake of watersports, or sit up on deck with a good book.

Compared with other Alternative lines, here's how Star Clippers rates:

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Outstanding
Enjoyment Factor					✓
Dining					✓
Activities				✓	
Children's Program	N/A				
Entertainment					✓
Service					✓
Overall Value					✓

THE FLEET

The ***Star Flyer*** and its twin, the ***Star Clipper,*** will both spend summer 2004 in Europe. The twin vessels are at once traditional and radical. They're the tallest and among the fastest clipper ships ever built, and with dimensions about 100 feet longer than the average 19th-century clipper, they're so beautiful that even at full stop they seem to soar. The five-masted ***Royal Clipper*** carries 228 passengers and measures 439 feet in length, making it one of the largest sailing ships ever built.

Star Clipper's ships look like they should sail under wind power, and generally rely on sails for about 25% to 35% of their propulsion (on some sailings more and others less) and on engines for the rest. Still, whether engines are running or not, sails are up nearly the entire trip, creating a beautiful effect. And to top off the salty experience, the ships have live parrots on board as mascots.

PASSENGER PROFILE

While you're likely to find a handful of late-20-something honeymooners, the majority of passengers are well-traveled couples in their late 40s to 60s, active, and intellectually curious. Many will be leisure sailors, and you may even encounter some retired seamen.

With only 172 to 228 passengers on board, each cruise seems like a triumph of individuality and intimacy. The line's unusual niche appeals to passengers who might recoil at the forced enthusiasm of cruises aboard larger, resort-style vessels (passengers on these ships would pass at bingo to sit on deck chatting or reading a good book). About 20% of any passenger roster is composed of people who have never cruised before, perhaps for this very reason. On the flip side, according to a company spokesperson, 80% of passengers have cruised before on big ships, like Holland America or Princess, and appreciate a "premium" soft-adventure cruise like Star Clippers. Many passengers are repeaters (overall, repeaters make up a whopping 60% of passengers, according to the company). About half are European, the remainder North American. The line's founder and owner, Mikael Krafft, may even be on board, in many cases with his wife and children, traveling as a low-key guest.

DINING

Overall, food is good and presented well. Breakfast and lunch are served **buffet-style,** with dinner being the sit-down meal of the day (except for a buffet the first night of the cruise). Star Clippers' cuisine has evolved and improved through the years as the line has poured more time and effort into it. All meals are open seating and served in the restaurant at tables of four, six, and eight, and the dress code is always casual (people dress up slightly at night). Catering to a European as well as North American clientele, all buffets include a better-than-average selection of cheeses, several types of salad, cold cuts, and fish. At breakfast, in addition to a cold and hot buffet spread, there's an **omelet station** where a staff member will make your eggs the way you like them, and the nifty feature

Fun Fact **Going to Great Lengths**

Introduced in 2000, the $55 million *Royal Clipper* is the largest sailing ship ever built, and the first five-masted sailing ship built since 1902 (it was modeled after the previous largest and fastest, the *Preussen,* built in 1902).

Star Clippers Fleet Itineraries

Ship	Home Ports & Season	Itinerary
Royal Clipper	**7-day Italy 1,** Civitavecchia/Rome (Italy) (May–July); **7-day Italy 2** (May–July); **10- and 11-day Med,** Civitavecchia/Rome and Venice (Italy) (July–Sept)	**7-day Italy 1:** Port calls include Mazarades Vallo, Syracuse, Panarea, and Ventotene (Italy), and Valletta (Malta); **7-day Italy 2:** Port calls include Ponza, Sorrento, Amalfi, Taormina, and Lipari (Italy); **10- and 11-day Med:** Port calls may include Capri, Lipari, Sorrento, and Taormina (Italy), Corfu (Greece), and Dubrovnik, Kurcula, and Hvar (Croatia)
Star Clipper	**7-day France and Italy 1,** Cannes (France) (June–Oct); **7-day France and Italy 2,** Cannes (France) (June–Oct)	**7-day France and Italy 1:** Port calls include Porquerolles, Bonifacio, and Calvi (France), and Costa Smeralda (Italy); **7-day France and Italy 2:** Port calls include L'Ile de Rousse and Bastia (France), Portoferraio, Portovenere, and Portofino (Italy), and Monte Carlo (Monaco)
Star Flyer	**7-day E. Med 1,** Piraeus/Athens (Greece) (May–Sept); **7-day E. Med 2,** Istanbul (May–Sept)	**7-day E. Med:** Port calls include Samos, Patmos, Mykonos, and Sifnos (Greece), and Kuşdasi (Turkey); **7-day E. Med 2:** Port calls include Rhodes, Hydra, and Santorini (Greece), and Bodrum (Turkey)

of separate hot plates for crispy and limp bacon. Late afternoon snacks served at the Tropical Bar include items like tacos, spring rolls, or ice-cream sundaes with fresh coconut and pistachio toppings.

At dinner, four main entrees (seafood, meat, vegetarian, and a light dish) are offered, as well as appetizers, soup, salad, and dessert. Choices might include lobster and shrimp with rice pilaf, beef curry, and pasta dishes. When the ship is full, things can feel a bit frenetic at dinner (breakfast and lunch don't get as crowded as passengers tend to eat at staggered times). Waiters and bartenders are efficient and friendly, and dress in costume for several theme nights each week.

There's a worthwhile selection of **wines** on board, emphasizing medium-priced French, German, and California selections. Coffee and tea are available from a 24-hour coffee station in the piano bar.

Room service is available only for guests who are sick and can't make it to the dining room and for those in the top suites.

ACTIVITIES

If you're looking for action, shopping, and dozens of organized tours, you won't find much on these ships and itineraries. For the most part, socializing among passengers and with the crew is the main activity (as it is on most any ship of this size). In fact, the friendliness starts the moment you board, with the captain and hotel director personally greeting passengers and inviting them to have a complimentary cocktail and hors d'oeuvres.

Many activities involve simply exploring these extraordinary ships. The captain gives **informal talks** on maritime themes, and at least once a day the cruise director speaks about the upcoming ports and shipboard events. Knot-tying might be the topic of the day, or you might get to participate in a man-overboard drill. Within reason, passengers can lend a hand with **deck-side duties,** observe the mechanics of navigation, and have a token try at handling the wheel

or pulling in the ropes when circumstances and calm weather permit. E-mail is available using a computer in the library of each ship: $24 for 30 minutes (when satellite connections are good). You cannot check your own account or go on the Internet. Calls from in-cabin phones are $6.50 a minute, which is quite reasonable by shipboard standards.

Each ship maintains an **open-bridge policy,** allowing passengers to wander up to the humble-looking navigation center day or night.

Partly because owner Mikael Krafft is an avid scuba diver and partly because itineraries focus on waters that teem with marine life, each ship offers (for an extra charge) the option of PADI-approved scuba diving. Certified divers will find all the equipment they'll need on board. Even inexperienced divers can begin the certification process on board.

Other activities may include a brief engine-room tour, and **massages** are available, too (a great deal at $48 an hr.), doled out in a spare cabin or a small cabana on deck. Of course, sunbathing is a sport in and of itself. Crawling in the bowsprit netting is a thrill and an effective way to try and spot sea creatures just feet below you.

Activities revolve around exploring the historic and romantic ports that cling to the Mediterranean's shores, with a limited number of organized shore excursions offered. And, wherever possible (usually more often in the Aegean than the French or Italian Rivieras), activities will also include beaches and watersports, which are all complimentary. **Snorkeling** equipment is issued at the beginning of the week for anyone who wants it, and for **water-skiing** and **banana boat rides,** the young surfer-boy sports staff operates four Zodiacs that are carried on the ship. Because everything is so laid-back, there are no sign-up sheets—guests merely hang out by the gangway or on the beach until it's their turn.

Ships tend to depart from their ports of call early enough so they can be under full sail during sunset. Trust us on this one: Position yourself at the ship's rail or dawdle over a drink at the deck bar to watch the sun melt into the horizon behind the silhouette of the ships' masts and ropes. It's something you won't forget.

CHILDREN'S PROGRAM

This is not a line for young children, and there are no supervised activities. That said, an experience aboard a sailing ship can be a wonderful educational and adventurous experience, especially for children at least 10 years old. No babysitting is available, unless a well-intentioned crew member agrees to volunteer his or her off-duty hours.

ENTERTAINMENT

Some sort of featured entertainment takes place each night after dinner by the Tropical Bar, which is the main hub of activity. And nearly everyone comes out to join in the fun. There's a fashion show 1 night featuring the hunky sports crew (sometimes in drag), modeling items from the gift ship. Another night offers a **crew talent show,** which may include an Elvis impersonation by a singing bartender. Other events may include a trivia contest, a dance, or music from **local entertainers** on board for the night. A keyboard player is on hand to sing pop songs before and after dinner, and there may be a pianist playing jazzy tunes in the Piano Bar. Some nights, disco music is put on the sound system and the deck between the deck bar and library becomes a dance floor. The highlight event, however, is the **Crab Races,** which involves betting on live crabs. A couple of **movies** are available every day on cabin TVs, if you feel like vegging.

SERVICE

Service is congenial, low-key, unpretentious, cheerful, and reasonably attentive. Expect efficient but sometimes slightly distracted service in the cramped dining room, and realize that you'll have to fetch your own ice, bar drinks, and whatever else you might need during your time on deck.

The crew is from all over the world, including Poland, Switzerland, Russia, Germany, Romania, Indonesia, and the Philippines. Their presence creates a wonderful international flavor on board. Friendly and indulgent, crew members are usually good-natured about clients who want to tie knots, raise and lower sails, and keep the deck shipshape. As English is not the mother language of some crew members, though, certain details might get lost in the translation.

Officers typically dine with guests at every meal, and if you'd like to have dinner with the captain, just go up to the bridge and ask him.

You may send laundry out, but there is no self-serve laundry or dry cleaning.

Star Clipper • Star Flyer

The Verdict

With the sails and rigging of classic clipper ships and the creature comforts of modern megas, cruises on the 170-passenger *Star Clipper* (pictured) and its twin *Star Flyer* offer the best of two worlds and a wonderful way to explore the Mediterranean.



Star Clipper *(photo: Star Clippers)*

Specifications

Size (in tons)	2,298	Officers	Int'l
Number of Cabins	84	Crew	70 (Int'l)
Number of Outside Cabins	78	Passenger/Crew Ratio	2.5 to 1
Cabins with Verandas	0	Year Built	1992/1991
Number of Passengers	172	Last Major Refurbishment	2003

Frommer's Rating (Scale of 1–5)

Cabin Comfort & Amenities	3	Pool, Fitness & Spa Facilities	3
Ship Cleanliness & Maintenance	4	Children's Facilities	N/A
Public Comfort/Space	4	Decor	4

Life aboard the *Star Clipper* and *Star Flyer* means life on deck. Because there are few other hideaways, that's where most passengers spend their days. Made from teakwood, these decks were planned with lots of passenger space, although some of it is cluttered with the winches, ropes, and other equipment of these working ships. There are lots of nooks and crannies on deck, and even with a full load the ship rarely feels overly crowded (except at dinner). Most sail-trimming activity occurs mid-ship and near the bow, so if you're looking to avoid all the bustle, take yourself off to the stern, where readers and nappers grab lounge chairs in an area shaded by a canopy.

Cabins & Rates

Cabins	Brochure Rates*	Bathtub	Fridge	Hair Dryer	Sitting Area	TV
Inside	$1,675–$1,875	no	no	yes	no	no
Outside	$1,875–$2,795	no	no	yes	no	yes
Suite	$3,795	yes	yes	yes	no	yes

**Port charges are an extra $175 per person.*

CABINS Cabins feel roomy for a ship of this size and feature a pleasant nautical motif—blue fabrics and carpeting, portholes, brass-toned lighting fixtures, and a dark wood trim framing the off-white furniture and walls. The majority of cabins are outside and measure from about 120 to 130 square feet. They have two twin beds that can be converted into a double, a small desk/vanity with stool, and an upholstered seat fitted into the corner. Storage space is more than adequate for a 7-night casual cruise in a warm climate, with both a slim floor-to-ceiling closet and a double-width closet of shelves; there is also storage below the beds, desk, nightstand, and chair. Each cabin has a telephone, hair dryer, and safe, and all but the four smallest inside cabins (measuring a compact 95 sq. ft.) have a color television showing news and a selection of popular movies.

Standard bathrooms are small but functional, with marble walls, a nice mirrored storage cabinet that actually stays closed, and a narrow shower divided from the rest of the bathroom by only the curtain (surprisingly, the rest of the bathroom stays dry when the shower is being used). The sinks are fitted with annoying push valves, which release water only when they're compressed. The only real difference between the cabins in categories two and three is about a square foot of space. The eight deluxe cabins measure about 150 square feet, open right out onto the main deck, and have minibars and whirlpool bathtubs. Because of their location near the Tropical Bar, though, noise can be a problem.

None of the units is a suite, except for one carefully guarded (and oddly configured) owner's suite in the aft of the Clipper Deck that's available to the public only when it's not being set aside for special purposes.

Take note: The ship's generator tends to drone on through the night; cabins near the stern on lower decks are the most susceptible to this. Also, you may hear dishes clanging in cabins near the dining room.

PUBLIC AREAS The handful of public rooms include the dining room, a comfy piano bar with banquette seating, the outside Tropical Bar (sheltered from the sun and rain by a canopy), and a cozy, paneled library with a decorative, nonfunctioning fireplace and a good stock of coffee-table books, tracts on naval history and naval architecture, plus general titles. The piano bar and outdoor Tropical Bar are the ship's hubs of activity.

Throughout, the interior decor is pleasant but unmemorable, mostly white with touches of brass and mahogany or teakwood trim—not as upscale-looking as vessels operated by Windstar, but cozy, appealing, well designed, and shipshape.

ALTERNATIVE DINING None.

POOL, FITNESS & SPA FACILITIES Two small pools are meant more for dipping than swimming; one has glass portholes peering from its depths into the piano bar (and vice versa). The pool near the stern tends to be more languid, the favorite of sunbathers, whereas the one at amidships is more active, with more noise and splashing and central to the action. While there's no gym, aerobics and

stretch classes are frequently held on deck between the library and Tropical Bar. PADI diving instruction is offered. There's also snorkeling (complimentary equipment is distributed at the start of the cruise), water-skiing, windsurfing, and banana boat rides offered by the ship's watersports team in all ports (the ships carry along Zodiac motorboats for this purpose).

Royal Clipper

The Verdict

Star Clipper's newest ship is also its biggest and most fabulous.



Royal Clipper *(photo: Star Clippers)*

Specifications

Size (in tons)	5,000	Officers	Int'l
Number of Cabins	114	Crew	106 (Int'l)
Number of Outside Cabins	108	Passenger/Crew Ratio	2.1 to 1
Cabins with Verandas	14	Year Built	2000
Number of Passengers	228	Last Major Refurbishment	N/A

Frommer's Rating (Scale of 1–5)

Cabin Comfort & Amenities	4	Pool, Fitness & Spa Facilities	4
Ship Cleanliness & Maintenance	4	Children's Facilities	N/A
Public Comfort/Space	5	Decor	4

The *Royal Clipper* is Star Clippers' biggest, newest, and plushest ship. The fully rigged, 439-foot vessel was launched in July 2000, and it's the largest fully rigged sailing ship in the world. With five masts flying 42 sails that together stretch to 56,000 square feet, it can hit 13 knots under engine power and 20 knots under sail power only. Size and power aside, the ship is extremely well accoutered, with a windowed disco, a three-story glass atrium, a three-story restaurant, and 14 suites with private deck patios.

Cabins & Rates

Cabins	Brochure Rates*	Bathtub	Fridge	Hair Dryer	Sitting Area	TV
Inside	$1,775	no	no	yes	no	yes
Outside	$1,875–$2,795	no	no	yes	no	yes
Suite	$3,795–$4,795	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

**Port charges are an extra $175 per person.*

CABINS All but six cabins are outside, with the average measuring 148 square feet. All have such accoutrements as brass light fixtures and mahogany furniture. And all come with hair dryers, safes, telephones, and TVs. About a fourth of the cabins have a third berth. Fourteen deluxe suites are located on the Main Deck

forward, and boast private balconies, sitting areas, minibars, and whirlpool tubs. Two owner's suites measure 320 square feet and each has two double beds and two marble bathrooms—small, but a little more luxurious than on the other Star Clipper vessels. There is a little more storage space on the *Royal Clipper* as well.

PUBLIC AREAS The Observation Room offers a 90-person lounge with forward views that is used for meetings and lectures; it's a quiet place to read during the day. Like the other ships, it has a central indoor/outdoor bar area (with a piano in the indoor portion). The nice-size library is dressed in Edwardian-style furnishings. Captain Nemo is a combination fitness–massage area, and sometimes doubles as a bar for private functions. It boasts underwater portholes: When the ship is at anchor, lights are turned on so you can see fish swimming around. The vessel boasts a three-story glass atrium and a three-level restaurant with a grand spiraling staircase. The ship's decor includes lots of wood accents and polished brass, as well as nautical paintings.

ALTERNATIVE DINING None.

POOL, FITNESS & SPA FACILITIES Unlike the earlier vessels, this one does have a small gym and massage area, with the neat feature of portholes below the waterline (see Captain Nemo, above), and featuring about a dozen machines including bikes and treadmills. The ship also has three pools. The biggest and most active pool is in the center of the ship and has an outdoor bar; for quieter times head aft. The *Royal Clipper* boasts a retractable swimming, diving, and watersports platform. Outdoor deck space is expansive. There are even hidden balconies on either side of the bow, for those who want to get away from it all.

9

River Cruises

Cruising on Europe's rivers, canals, and lakes affords a pleasant alternative to inland bus tours or car treks and allows you to see a good deal of each country you visit. Whether aboard **river ships** or small converted commercial **barges,** the pace is leisurely, the ambience generally informal, and, just like on an oceangoing cruise ship, you only have to unpack once, and meals and accommodations (and sometimes shore excursions) are included in the cruise fare. Also, a river cruise is perfect for those worried about getting seasick on an oceangoing vessel, as the waters are calm.

RIVER SHIPS

River ships are popular in Europe, especially with European travelers, although increasing numbers of Americans are discovering their virtues as well, leading the ship companies to add more English-speaking crew members (if you are cruising in Russia, it's a good rule of thumb to make sure the hotel and food service is also overseen by a non-Russian firm), plus amenities like suites and even some cabins with balconies.

On these long, low (usually no more than three or four decks) vessels, you and up to 250 fellow passengers will comfortably enjoy the passing scenery from a famous waterway like the Danube, Seine, or Rhine, visiting ports such as Budapest, Hungary; Vienna, Austria; and beautiful venues like Speyer and Koblenz, Germany. The vessels may cruise during the day or night, and some spend the night in key cities so you can get off and enjoy the local nightlife.

These floating hotels typically offer comfortable (though small) **cabins,** usually with a window. On the newer ships, the cabins may have TVs and minibars. **Cuisine** is hearty and in some cases gourmet, as aboard the Peter Deilmann ships. **Public rooms** are limited, since these are small vessels, but they will include a nice lounge and dining room, and some ships have a separate bar, large viewing decks, and sometimes small splash pools, spas, and gyms. Light entertainment may be provided by a piano player or singer.

Most passengers on these ships will be adults, ages 55 and up. Itineraries range from 2 nights to more than 2 weeks. The season is March to November. Some lines also offer pre- and post-cruise land options. The rates for some are under $100 per day, making them an affordable way to visit several countries on one trip.

BARGES

Barges are tiny vessels—many carry fewer than 12 passengers—and are pretty much the floating equivalent of a stay at a New England B&B—even to the extent that some barges are crewed by the families that own them. Americans in particular are drawn to these products because they're one of the most relaxing and pampering vacation experiences you can find. Intimate surroundings, gourmet food, and fine wine are what barge cruising is all about. Also, because the

Piloting Your Own Barge

The British **Crown Blue Line** is among a number of companies offering self-skippered barges. The easy-to-handle boats allow you the freedom to go where you want and eat where you want, with whomever you want. No previous boating experience is required. The barges, which accommodate 2 to 12 passengers, can be rented for as little as $780 (for a boat for two) for a 1-week outing. You can book the product through Abercrombie & Kent, Le Boat, and MaupinWaterways (see below).

vessels are small, some people opt to rent the entire barge with a group of family members and/or friends.

The barges move very slowly through the countryside—so slowly you can, if you choose, grab one of the bikes the barge will carry and pedal alongside. They move on historic canals that are navigated using a series of locks. When you stop at a town or city, you will be whisked away in a van for a private tour. The barges dock at night, allowing you additional opportunities to explore.

The passenger mix on board is all-important, as you'll get to know everyone very well during the course of a week, dining together, touring together, and relaxing together. **Meals** are a big part of the barge experience and are worth lingering over. Lunch and dinner will include complimentary wine, often from the region you are visiting.

Most barges have had an earlier life as supply vessels. Many are antiques and have been rebuilt to accommodate passengers. **Public rooms** typically include a dining room/lounge with a bar area, and the barges are configured to allow for a good amount of deck space. Some have tiny swimming pools and gyms. **Cabins** will be on the small side but comfortable, and some barges have larger suites available. Most cabins, but not all, have private bathrooms and windows or portholes.

Passengers will mostly be adults, although a few barges specialize in hosting families. A fun option for families is the self-drive barge (see below). **Shore excursions** are usually included in the cruise fare, with the exception of hot-air ballooning, available for an extra charge.

Barges are most popular in France, but you can also cruise in Holland, Ireland, and elsewhere, as noted below. The season is spring to fall (with reduced rates in Apr and Oct–Nov), and most itineraries are 6-night.

BOOKING A RIVER CRUISE

Both river ships and barges are typically represented in the U.S. by **brokers** who market a number of different vessels (it's these companies we've included in this chapter). Sometimes the same vessel may be booked by several different companies. A few also operate their own vessels, as noted. All rates listed are the lowest available per diems (multiply them by the number of days covered on the itinerary), are per person, are based on double occupancy, and vary by itinerary. You can book through a travel agent, or contact the numbers listed.

Abercrombie & Kent Upscale tour operator A&K offers barge cruises on a fleet of 32 vessels in England, France, Belgium, Holland, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Russia (between Moscow and St. Petersburg), and Scotland, including Continental Waterways' vessels *l'Abercrombie* and *Lafayette.* There are also river cruisers on the Nile traveling through Egypt. There's also a

vessel in Burma, China and on the Amazon from Brazil to Peru. The company also offers the Crown Blue Line self-skippered product (see "Piloting Your Own Barge," above), plus it offers river cruises on ships in France, also operated by Continental Waterways, as well as river cruises in other locations, including Russia, sold as part of a cruisetour package. The barge cruises are 6-day, with rates ranging from $1,690 to $6,250. Rates for 6-day river cruises in France are $1,990 to $4,300.

1520 Kensington Rd., Oak Brook, IL 60523. ✆ **800/323-7308.** www.abercrombiekent.com.

The Barge Lady The Barge Lady represents more than 50 6- to 12-passenger barges that cruise throughout France (including some departing from Paris), Belgium, Holland, Scotland, Germany, England, and Ireland. The company also represents a few bigger river barges of up to 50 passengers. Barge cruises are 6-night, 7-day, with rates ranging from $1,690 to $5,695. The Barge Lady, working with a partner in France, also offers 7-night, self-drive cruises, which include a captain-concierge by day, with rates starting at $4,350 a week.

101 West Grand Ave., Ste. 200, Chicago, IL 60610. ✆ **800/880-0071.** www.bargelady.com. www.selfdriveplus.com

Continental Waterways This firm, which is bookable through other companies mentioned in this chapter (as noted below), was co-founded by a British journalist working on a story in France for Reuters in 1966, and helped pioneer the concept of hotel barges on European waterways. It has a fleet of 17 barges, including the 50-passenger *Provence* which cruises the Provence region, and the 24-passenger *Mirabelle* serving Bordeaux. Beginning in 2004, the *Escargot* will offer a new "Bike and Barge" program. Cruising areas include Alsace, Burgundy, Champagne, Franche-Comte, Ile de France, eastern and upper Loire, Belgium, Holland, Germany, and Paraguay. Call the operators listed below for rates.

c/o Abercrombie & Kent, ✆ **800/323-7308;** Barge Lady, ✆ 800/880-0071; EuroCruises, ✆ 800/688-3876; Ewaterways.com, ✆ 800/546-4777; or Premier Selections, ✆ 800/234-4000.

The Cruise Broker This company represents two European cruise lines. Fred Olsen Cruise Lines has three ships: 761-passenger *Black Watch,* 412-passenger *Black Prince,* and 727-passenger *Braemar.* Most departures are two-week cruises from the U.K, with some Caribbean cruises, and one longer cruise, such as a round-the-world cruise, per year. Prices on Fred Olsen ships range from $140 to $500 per person per night. Kristina Cruises has two ships, the 245-passenger *Kristina Regina* which sails Northern Europe in summer and the Mediterranean and West Africa in winter, and the 100-passenger *Kristina Brahe* sailing in summer to Finland, Russia, Sweden, and Estonia. Prices run $80 to $300 a person per night on the *Kristina Regina* and $80 to $200 per night on the *Kristina Brahe.*

PO Box 342, New York 10014-0342. ✆ **888/875-5880.** www.fredolsencruises.co.uk; www.kristinacruises.com.

Ewaterways.com (formerly B&V Waterways) This company books cruises aboard about 35 privately owned barges sailing in Ireland, Holland, Belgium, England, and France (including Burgundy, Provence, the Armagnac, and the upper Loire and Loire Valley regions). Special theme cruises include golf, gardening, bicycling, wine, bird-watching, and photography. The line also offers river barge cruises in Beaujolais and Provence (France) on 20- to 50-passenger luxury vessels, and river cruises on bigger vessels (up to about 200-passengers) in

Germany, France, and Holland. Rates for 6-day barge cruises are $1,300 to $5,000.

53 E. 34th St., New York 10016. ✆ **800/546-4777.** www.ewaterways.com.

French Country Waterways This firm owns and operates the luxury barges *Esprit, Horizon II, Liberté, Nenuphar,* and *Princess,* accommodating 8 to 18 passengers. The company's six French itineraries include Burgundy, the Upper Loire Valley, the Champagne region, and Alsace/Lorraine. Cruises are 6-day, and rates range from $3,195 to $4,795.

P.O. Box 2195, Duxbury, MA 02331. ✆ **800/222-1236.** www.fcwl.com.

Global Quest (formerly OdessAmerica) Global Quest operates 130- to 270-passenger river ships including the *Peter the Great, Viking Pakhomov,* and *Viking Kirov* on the waterways of Russia, including cruises between Moscow and St. Petersburg. The company also offers cruises on the Danube. Itineraries are from 11 to 14 days, with rates for 11-day cruises ranging from $1,598 to $1,898 outside, and around $3,398 for suites.

185 Willis Ave., Mineola, NY 11501. ✆ **800/221-3254.** www.globalquesttravel.com.

Intrav Intrav, the parent company of Clipper Cruise Line (see chapter 8), also charters the 76- to 240-passenger *Novikov Priboy, Switzerland II,* and *Amadeus* and three large barges: *Vincent Van Gogh, Rembrandt, and Provence*. Vessels offer cruises on the Danube and Rhine, as well as in Holland, Belgium, Germany, Portugal, Slovakia, Hungary, Russia, the Czech Republic, Austria, and France. Intrav cruise directors and local experts in history and culture accompany the sailings, which range from 9 to 17 days. All cruises include round-trip airfare from New York, and all sightseeing and shore excursions. Some itineraries are sold as cruisetours with hotel nights. Voyages are offered April to October, depending on the destination. Rates range from $1,995 to $4,895, depending on the itinerary.

11969 Westline Industrial Dr. , St. Louis, MO 63146. ✆ **800/456-8100.** www.intrav.com.

Le Boat Le Boat represents six self-drive barge companies, 45 independent barges, and Continental Waterways. Programs operate in France, England, Ireland, Holland, Germany, Belgium, Italy, and Scotland from April to October, with some barges operating into December. All self-skippered trips are 7 days; crewed trips are 6 days. Rates for crewed barges are $1,790 to $4,500 per person, and self-skippered barges are from $900 to $4,000 per boat, per week.

45 Whitney Rd., Ste. C5, Mahwah, NJ 07430. ✆ **800/992-0291.** www.leboat.com.

MaupinWaterways Operated by tour operator Maupintour, this firm offers cruises on 38 barges and river vessels carrying 6 to 200 passengers in France, England, Ireland, Holland, Italy, Belgium, Germany, Austria, Czech Republic, Russia, South America, and the U.S. Cruises are 3 to 16 days. Rates range from $995 to $4,300.

10650 W. Charleston Blvd, Ste. 130, Summerlin, NV 89135. ✆ **800/255-4266.** www.maupintour.com.

Peter Deilmann EuropeAmerica Cruises This German firm, which also operates oceangoing vessels (see chapter 6), has nine deluxe river ships: the *Cezanne, Mozart, Danube Princess, Princess de Provence, Dresden, Konigstein, Katharina, Casanova,* and *Frederic Chopin.* Cruises operate on the Danube, Rhine, Moselle, Po, Oder, Seine, and Elbe rivers, as well as on Belgian and Dutch canals. A tenth vessel, the *Heidelberg,* will be introduced in 2004 on the

Danube. Each carries 58 to 207 passengers. The company markets extensively in the U.S., and about 50% of the passengers on Danube cruises (40% on the others) are American. Itineraries for the river cruises are 7 to 14 days. Some of the ships have inside cabins and suites (others are all outside cabins). Rates for 7-day cruises range from $1,020 to $1,525 inside, $1,450 to $2,995 outside, and $2,950 to $4,550 suite.

1800 Diagonal Rd., Ste. 170, Alexandria, VA 22314. ✆ **800/348-8287.** www.deilmann-cruises.com.

Uniworld This California-based firm offers 40 river cruise itineraries in Russia and other European destinations aboard 50- to 220-passenger river ships including the newest *River Countess* and *River Duchess.* Their other vessels include *River Queen, Douro Princess, Douro Prince, River Empress, Rhone Princess, River Princess, Saxonia, Venezia,* and *Seine Princess.* The company designs itineraries for American tastes, and the crew is English-speaking. Sailing areas include the Douro River in Portugal; the Po River in Italy; the Rhone, Saone, and Seine in France; assorted Dutch waterways; the Rhine and Moselle (Amsterdam to Basel); the Danube; and assorted waterways in Russia. The cruises range from 7 to 24 days. Rates start at $1,048. Some cruises are packaged as cruisetours and include a hotel stay.

Uniworld Plaza, 17323 Ventura Blvd., Encino, CA 91316. ✆ **800/733-7820.** www.uniworld.com.

Viking River Cruises The world's largest river cruise line, they began offering cruises on the Rhine in 1857. Uniworld operates 24 river ships in Europe and Russia, including the 150-passenger *Viking Neptune* and sister ships *Viking Spirit, Viking Pride,* and *Viking Europe.* These hotel-like ships were designed with U.S. passengers in mind, and offer such unusual river ship amenities as picture windows that open. Cabins come with hotel-style beds, TVs, phones, hair dryers, and safes. The vessels cruise on the Rhine, Main, Danube, and Elbe rivers in Germany, as well as in Russia, France, Italy, Holland, Austria, Hungary, and the Czech Republic. Cruise fares include round-trip air to Europe and daily sightseeing, and there are English-speaking crew and guides. Rates for 7-day cruises range from $1,459 to $3,159.

21820 Burbank Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 91367. ✆ **877/66-VIKING** (877/66-845460). www.vikingrivercruises.com.



Part 3

Ports of Call

With information and advice on things you can see and do in dozens of ports of call, whether on your own or as part of an organized tour.

10 The Port Experience: An Introduction

11 Mediterranean Ports of Call

12 Ports of Call in Northern Europe & the British Isles

10

The Port Experience: An Introduction

The ports are likely the reason you've chosen to cruise in Europe. Nearly all offer historical attractions, in some cases truly ancient historical attractions (it's amazing how young 1776 is in the scheme of things!). In addition, the ports offer cultural attractions, shopping opportunities, and, in many cases, beaches. And some of them allow you access to famous cities like London, Rome, Amsterdam, and Paris.

In the next two chapters we describe the ports in the Mediterranean and Northern Europe on a country-by-country basis. In each we've noted distances of attractions from the port as well as the availability of transportation to help you decide whether to take a shore excursion or tour on your own. For more detailed information on each port, consult the appropriate Frommer's guide, a listing of which appears at the back of this book.

1 Debarkation in Port

Generally, ships on European itineraries stop at a port a day, with some spending 1 day at sea (without stopping at a port). On longer cruises you will have more than 1 day at sea, during which the emphasis will be on smooth sailing and providing you with pretty views of the coastline while you relax and enjoy the onboard facilities.

Coming into port, ships generally arrive right after breakfast, allowing you the morning and afternoon to take a shore excursion or explore on your own. Your ship will either dock right at the pier or tie-up slightly offshore, in which case the ship will tender passengers ashore in small boats. In either case, there is a fair amount of time (sometimes as much as 2 hr.) between when the ship stops and when you can actually get off. That's because local authorities have to board and clear the ship, a process that allows you to leave the vessel without going through Customs. Despite the logic of it, it can be frustrating to see a city laid out in front of you and have to wait to be told when you can step off the ship.

If you're on a large ship, the process may be further delayed because thousands of passengers will want to get off at the same time. In these cases, you may be assigned to a specific group and be requested to wait to leave the ship until your group is called. Those on shore excursions usually get to disembark first. Ship officials will keep you well-informed of the process.

Remember, whether on a shore excursion or touring on your own, to bring your **boarding pass** when you leave the ship, since you won't be able to get back aboard without it. Remember also to bring **money**—after a few days in the cashless atmosphere of a ship, it's remarkably easy to forget. Some ships offer currency exchange services on board. You can also usually find an ATM, bank,

Currency Conversion Chart

	U.S. $1	C$1	U.K.£1	A$1	NZ $1
Belgium (euro)	.87	.64	1.44	.59	.52
Croatia (kuna)	6.60	4.89	10.94	4.48	3.92
Denmark (krone)	6.48	4.79	10.72	4.39	3.84
England (pound)	.60	.45	1	.36	.37
Estonia (kroon)	13.62	10.07	22.54	9.22	8.08
Finland (euro)	.87	.64	1.44	.59	.52
France (euro)	.87	.64	1.44	.59	.52
Germany (euro)	.87	.64	1.44	.59	.52
Greece (euro)	.87	.64	1.44	.59	.52
Ireland (euro)	.87	.64	1.44	.59	.52
Italy (euro)	.87	.64	1.44	.59	.52
Malta (lira)	.37	.27	.61	.25	.22
Netherlands (euro)	.87	.64	1.44	.59	.52
Norway (krone)	7.07	5.20	11.65	4.76	4.17
Portugal (euro)	.87	.64	1.44	.59	.52
Russia (ruble)	30	23	51	21	18
Spain (euro)	.87	.64	1.44	.59	.52
Sweden (krona)	7.81	5.75	12.87	5.27	4.61
Turkey (lira)	1,375,000	1,024,462	2,293,014	938,170	821,944

or other money exchange within walking distance of the pier where you can exchange a few dollars (though don't exchange too much or you'll end up having to change it back).

We also advise you to wear **comfortable shoes** (cobblestones and uneven surfaces are common in Europe) and bring along some **bottled water** (available on the ship), a hat, and sunscreen, especially in the summer months. If you are visiting churches or other religious sites, women may be required to cover their arms and legs. Your ship tour director should be able to offer you advice in this regard.

TAKING THE TRAIN

More intrepid travelers may want to save a few bucks by taking a train to get beyond the port city rather than booking the ship's pricier shore excursion or transfer options. Convenient service is offered in ports including Livorno (to get to Pisa or Florence) and Civitavecchia (to get to Rome), and we've indicated this in the following port chapters. Keep in mind, though, the train station may not be right near the pier (a cab or bus ride may be required to get there). For train schedules consult **www.raileurope.com**.

REBOARDING

Whether you do go off to explore on your own or are just puttering around in the port after your excursion, you'll need to carefully pay attention to the ship's **departure time** and be back at least a half-hour before that time. If your shore

excursion runs late, the ship will be held, but if you're off on your own and miss the boat, you will be responsible for paying your way to the next port. (If you do miss the boat, immediately contact the ship's representative at the pier.)

Ships usually depart in the early evening, giving you an hour or two to rest up before dinner. Small ships may even stay in port each evening to offer you a chance to sample the local nightlife, and some large ships will overnight in major ports such as Venice, Istanbul, or Monaco.

2 Shore Excursions

The cruise lines offer shore excursions to various sites of historical or cultural value or natural or artistic beauty, all designed to help you make the most of your limited time at each port of call. In general, excursions that take you well beyond the port area are the ones most worth taking—you'll get professional commentary and avoid hassling with local transportation. In ports that have attractions within walking distance of the pier, however, you may be best off touring on your own. If you are not a good walker, look for a shore excursion that does not involve much footwork (most lines have offerings in this regard).

Shore excursions typically involve buses, with a guide assigned to each bus. Even when you are on a European ship, you will have an English-speaking guide. However, if there are not enough English speakers to fill a whole bus, you may have to hear the commentary repeated in another language as well. Some of the more upscale and educational lines have expert lecturers who accompany shore excursions, and some offer tours in limos and minivans rather than in big buses.

Tours include entrance fees to attractions, and some include lunch or local folklore performances, as well as time for shopping either on your own or at a local crafts center (where you may be not so subtly encouraged to buy souvenirs). In some cases, you may have the option of lingering in a town and returning to the ship on your own.

The tours are usually conducted by local outside contractors and not by the cruise lines themselves. In some countries, including Greece and Turkey, the guides are required to be licensed and are thus very knowledgeable about their subject matter. Elsewhere, we have also generally been impressed with the level of the tours offered, with a few notable exceptions: Fran had a guide in Monaco, for instance, who tried to entertain us on our way to St-Paul-de-Vence with a combination of inane commentary on the scenery ("Oh, look at the sea, isn't it blue?") and gossip about Monaco's royal family, and who dropped us off telling us she would offer a historical walking tour if we wanted, but she knew we would all rather go shopping instead. All told, though, such lack of performance by guides in Europe is rare.

Shore excursion rates were accurate at press time, but are subject to change. Some lines, including Princess, Costa, and Royal Caribbean, also offer reduced-rate shore excursions for kids. **Tipping** of the guides after the tour is at your discretion, but as a general rule of thumb, you should tip 3.20€ to 8.05€ ($2–$5) per person for a half-day tour and 3.50€ to 8.70€ ($4–$10) per person for a full-day tour.

The cruise lines detail their excursions in brochures you'll likely receive in the mail with your cruise documents to allow you to preselect excursions that appeal to you. In some cases, you can book your excursions online before your cruise or by filling out and faxing in a form. In other cases, you must book the

Going Nowhere

At all the ports your ship will visit, you have the option of staying on the ship and relaxing. The restaurants usually remain open (even if you do get off, you can come back to eat, although we highly recommend in Europe that you try the local cuisine), and limited onboard activities may be offered.

tours aboard ship (preferably on the first day, since some will sell out). Excursions are sold on a nonrefundable first-come, first-served basis (some have capacity restrictions). Some lines include shore excursions in their cruise fares, but you may still be asked to sign up (to acknowledge you are accepting the offer). If you want to learn more about the touring options, the excursions staff will give talks aboard ship to fill you in. Honestly, they're sometimes more like sales pitches (the cruise lines do, after all, make money off the tours), but they do give more background than the one- or two-paragraph summations in the brochures.

3 Touring the Ports on Your Own

If you're an independent-minded traveler and/or hate bus tours, skip the organized shore excursions and head off on your own—though bear in mind that some ports (such as Civitavecchia in Italy and Le Havre in France) are not much to look at in and of themselves, and serve primarily as seaports for large and sometimes distant cities (Rome and Paris, respectively, in this instance). Where this is the case, you're probably best off taking the organized excursions, since they're already structured to maximize your limited time. The cruise line may also offer a bus transfer option to a distant city that drops you off and picks you up at a designated time. Taking a train (see above) may be another option.

Walking is, of course, the most enlightening way to see a port, but when you want to visit a site that's not within walking distance, you'll have to find transportation. In most ports it's both a hassle and expensive to rent a car on your own, so you're better off either taking a taxi or public transportation such as buses or subways, or arranging to hire a car and driver—if you get together a small group to do this you can split the price and save money. Your ship's tour office should be able to offer recommendations.

11

Mediterranean Ports of Call

The ports in the Mediterranean include Lisbon and Barcelona in the west and Athens and Turkey in the east, and everything in between. Here you'll find history from B.C. on, folk culture, high culture (think French Riviera), beaches, and shopping. Above anything else, the region offers great diversity: the riches of Venice and Rome; the glistening beaches of the French Riviera (populated by chic, equally glistening bodies); tiny Monte Carlo with its famous casino; the unbelievably scenic Italian Riviera; Dubrovnik, with its medieval ramparts and role in modern history; and the Greek Isles, with their incredible archaeological and local cultural offerings.

In the Med, you can follow the path of ancient mariners and find history around every corner, or you can just sit back in the sun to admire the incredibly blue sea and fabulous scenery. There's something for everyone.

1 Croatia

Heavily damaged during the shelling of 1991 and 1992 by Serbs and Montenegrins, the beautiful city of **Dubrovnik** has been restored—thanks in good part to donations made to the Rebuild Dubrovnik Fund—and cruise passengers name it as one of their favorites.

The Croatian city is a jewel to be sure (it's even classified as a world heritage treasure by UNESCO), encircled by medieval ramparts, with ancient streets, historic buildings and stone houses, and a rich cultural heritage, not to mention a fine position on the blue sea. The surrounding countryside provides glimpses of life the way it used to be.

CURRENCY The basic Croatian currency unit is the kuna (kn). It is made up of 100 lipa. The exchange rate at press time was $1 = 6.60kn.

LANGUAGE Croatian.

FROMMER'S FAVORITE DUBROVNIK EXPERIENCES

- **Walking the Placa (also called Stradun) and the side streets of Old Town.** Enter at the 16th-century Pile Gate and go exploring in this area, which has remained virtually unchanged since the 13th century.
- **Taking a ride in the country.** Shore excursions are offered to the pretty Konavle valley.

COMING ASHORE & GETTING AROUND Ships dock about 10 minutes by car or bus from the Old Town. **Taxis** are usually available at the pier. There are also **buses** to Old Town.

THE BEST SHORE EXCURSIONS

Half-Day Historic Dubrovnik (3–4½ hr.; $25–$64): Travel by motor coach from Gruz Harbor to Pile Gate, one of the entrances to the Old Town. Visit the Sponza Palace, Dominican church and monastery, Rector's Palace, Church of St. Blaise, Dubrovnik Cathedral, and 14th-century Franciscan Monastery. Walk the centuries-old streets of the Placa (Stradun).

Dubrovnik, Konavle Valley & Konavoski Dvori (5–6 hr.; $129–$138): Visit the Konavle region, 30 minutes south of Dubrovnik, to spend time in a natural setting. Enjoy a welcome of brandy and dried figs at the Konavoski Dvori restaurant, situated in an old water mill next to the Ljuta River, and enjoy a lunch of traditional food including grilled roast lamb, veal, and trout. It also includes a tour of historic Dubrovnik.

Dubrovnik, Konavle Valley and Konavle-style House (4½ hr.; $53–$60): Travel 30 minutes south of Dubrovnik to the Konavle region and the village of Mihanici. Visit the studio of local painter Mijo Sisa Konavljanin, who paints themes of daily life in Konavle. Stop at a traditional family home (the family produces and sells brandy, wine, and olive oil) in Poljica. Also includes a tour of Dubrovnik's Old Town.

THE TOP ATTRACTIONS

Cathedral Treasury Contains such religious treasures as the St. Blaise Reliquary, a reliquary of the Holy Cross from Jerusalem, and an array of paintings and works of art.

Kneza Damjana Jude 1. ✆ **385/411-715.** Admission 5kn (80¢) adults, 3kn (45¢) children. Weekdays 8am–8pm.

City Walls The walls run around part of the city for about 1.6km (1 mile). They were built between the 8th and 16th centuries. Walkers can visit five bastions and 15 lookout towers along the way. Entrance is on the north side, near St. Spasa Church.

Sv Dominika 3. ✆ **385/25-942.** Admission 15kn ($2.30) adults, 5kn (80¢) children. Daily 9am–6:30pm.

Dominican Monastery Construction began on this monastery and church complex in 1228, but it wasn't completed till some 200 years later. Some of the city's most renowned citizens are buried here, and the treasury is worth a look.

Sveti Dominika 4. ✆ **385/26-472.** Admission 10kn ($1.50) adults, 5kn (80¢) children. Daily 9am–6pm.

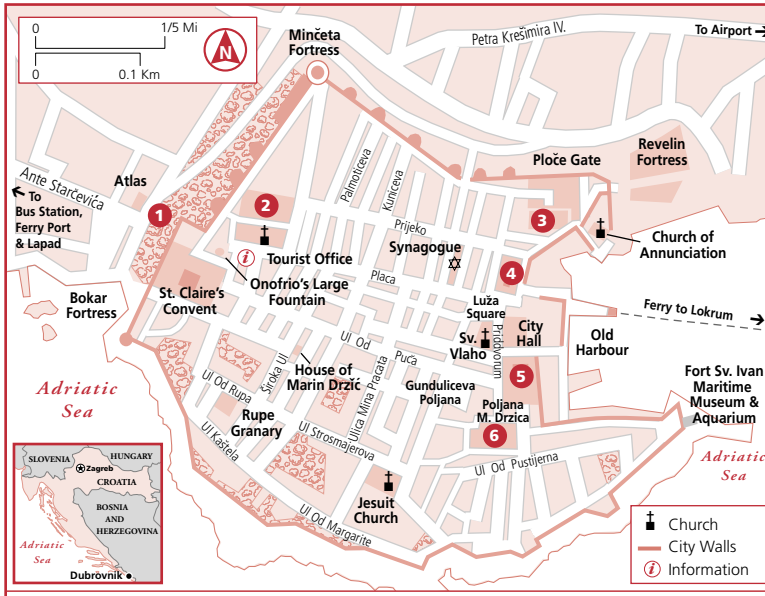
Dubrovnik Museum–Rector's Palace The rector of Dubrovnik lived here, but the palace, constructed beginning in 1435, was also a seat of government. The rector was not allowed to leave the palace during his short, 1-month term unless he was engaged in state business. The architecture combines Gothic and early Renaissance styles, and the palace today houses a museum with furnished rooms, historical exhibits, and baroque paintings.

Pred Dvorom 3. ✆ **385/26-469.** Admission 15kn ($2.30) adults, 10kn ($1.50) children. Mon–Sat 9am–6pm.

Franciscan Monastery Dating from the 14th century, the monastery has an impressive cloister, a rich library with a beautiful reading room, and a pharmacy that dates back to 1317.

Placa 2. ✆ **385/26-345.** Admission 6kn (90¢) adults, 4kn (60¢) children. Daily 9am–6pm.

Dubrovnik, Old Town



Cathedral of the Assumption of the Virgin **6**
Dominican church and monastery **3**
Franciscan Monastery **2**
The Orlando Column **4**
Pile Gate **1**
The Rector's Palace **5**
Sponza Palace **4**

Sponza Palace This is one of the most beautiful buildings in the city, featuring a mix of late Gothic and early Renaissance styles, with impressive stone carvings. Construction started in 1516, and the luxurious building was used as a sort of customhouse. The atrium, with its arched galley, was said to have been the liveliest commercial center and meeting place for businessmen in the city. One wing of the palace housed the state mint. And intellectuals gathered here as "The Academy of the Learned."

Luza Square.

The Synagogue The second-oldest Sephardic synagogue in Europe and home of the Jewish Community of Dubrovnik.

Zudioska 5. ✆ **385/412-219.** Free admission. Mon–Fri 9am–1pm, closed Sat and Sun.

LOCAL FLAVORS

Local favorites include scampi and other seafood dishes, *manistra od bobica* (a bean soup), and *strukle* (rolls made with cottage cheese). Wash your meal down with a local Croatian wine (they're pretty good).

BEST BUYS

Shop here for lace, embroidery, woodcarvings, carpets, ceramics, tapestries, jewelry, and leather and woolen products. There are also a number of art galleries throughout the city. Stores generally close for lunch.

2 The French Riviera & Monte Carlo

The French Riviera is less than 201km (125 miles) long and is located between the Mediterranean and a trio of mountain ranges. **Cannes, Nice, Villefranche, St-Tropez,** and **Monte Carlo** are all so close together geographically that they offer nearly the same shore excursions, although each port has its own special flavor and charms. They are all located on the scenic Côte d'Azur, where the natural beauty includes coastal mountains and a very blue sea, and the man-made beauty includes yachts, diamond jewelry, and other reminders that the French Riviera is a playground of the rich and famous. Artists who have captured the glorious landscape here include Matisse, Cocteau, Picasso, Léger, Renoir, and Bonnard. Their works can be found at numerous museums throughout the area.

All the ports are crowded with tourists in the summer months, particularly in July and August. The scenic drive between the ports is gorgeous but can be slow, depending on the traffic.

Cannes is a bustling commercial center. The grand hotels made famous during the International Film Festival can be found on the seafront boulevards, but it's Coco Chanel, not the festival, who's credited with putting the city on the map when she came, got a suntan, then went back to Paris and started a trend. Cannes beaches today continue to be more for exhibitionism and voyeurism than swimming.

The city offers great shopping opportunities, including outlets of major Paris names such as Saint Laurent, Rykiel, and Hermès, which can be found on La Croisette. More reasonable shopping can be found a few blocks inland on rue d'Antibes.

The 111-hectare (370-acre) principality of **Monaco** became the property of the Grimaldi clan, a Genoese family, in 1297, and has maintained something resembling independence ever since. Its capital, **Monte Carlo,** has for a century symbolized glamour—and the 1956 marriage of Prince Rainier and the American actress Grace Kelly after their meeting at the Cannes film festival only enhanced that status. Their children, Caroline, Albert, and Stephanie, have lived their entire lives in the spotlight, and the bachelor status of Albert, the heir, has the entire principality concerned.

Visitors are always surprised at how small Monaco is. The second smallest state in Europe (Vatican City is smaller), Monaco consists of four tightly packed (we're talking prime real estate here) parts: the old town, setting for the royal palace (where a 10-min. changing of the guard ceremony is held daily at 11:55am) and the Monaco Cathedral (where the tomb of Princess Grace is located); La Condamine, the residential area; Monte Carlo, where the fancy hotels and famous casino are located; and Fontvieille, the commercial area.

When exploring the city, you can walk up hills or use Monaco's somewhat bizarre system of public elevators that take you, for instance, from the harbor to the casino. There is also a tram service that operates on a circuit between the palace, aquarium, and casino, priced at a reasonable 5.50€ ($6.30).

Nice, while once a Victorian playground of the aristocracy, is today a big middle-class city. It's the capital of the Riviera and the largest city between Genoa and Marseille. It's also one of the most ancient cities in the region, founded by the Greeks, who called it Nike, or Victory.

Artists and writers have long been attracted to the city, including Dumas, Nietzsche, Flaubert, Hugo, Sand, and Stendahl. Henri Matisse made his home here.

Our favorite activity here is museum-hopping, especially in nearby Cimiez, home of the Musée National Message Biblique Marc-Chagall and the Musée Matisse. It's also fun to explore Nice's Old Town, with its colorful houses and narrow streets. The area around the Flower Market is full of outdoor cafes and a great place to people-watch. As bizarre as it may seem, it's also worth a trek uphill to the old graveyard of Nice, where great views and an interesting setting can be found, including lavishly sculpted monuments.

The promenade des Anglais is a wide boulevard on the bay, stretching several miles, and is a lovely walking spot past cafes and historic buildings, and, on the beaches, bronzed bodies in teeny-weeny bikinis.

Brigitte Bardot made the St-Tropez resort famous when she was filmed here in 1957 by her husband, Roger Vadim, in *And God Created Woman;* fun-in-the-sun is still the word in this thriving artists' colony. While the reputation is for hedonism (and you will see topless and even bottomless sunbathers on the beach), there is also a bit of quaint mixed in. Among the recent celebrities spotted here are Barbra Streisand, Jack Nicholson, Robert DeNiro, Sylvester Stallone, Oprah Winfrey, and Elton John.

The town was destroyed by the Germans in 1944, but the local residents, working from old plans and photos, rebuilt the small village to look exactly as it had before. In addition to the beaches, St-Tropez offers good shopping, including a wealth of antiques dealers and art galleries in Old Town.

Villefranche-sur-Mer is a lovely little port town, located only 6.4km (4 miles) from Nice. According to legend, Hercules opened his arms and Villefranche was born. But it is also home to the U.S. Sixth Fleet, and when the fleet's in, the quiet town takes on a decidedly different flavor, turning into a bustling Mediterranean port.

The town is a haven for artists (many of whom take over the houses on the hillside in summer), and provides a nice setting for a quiet day of walking and exploring. But Villefranche is also a good starting point for shore excursions to Nice, Eze, St-Paul-de-Vence, and Monaco.

One artist who came to Villefranche was Jean Cocteau, who left a legacy in the form of frescoes on the 14th-century walls of the Romanesque Chapelle St-Pierre. Also of particular interest is the Rue Obscure, a vaulted street.

Away from the coast, **St-Paul-de-Vence,** visitable by shore excursion, is the best known of the region's perched villages, a feudal hamlet growing on a bastion of rock, almost blending into it. Its ramparts overlook a peaceful setting of flowers and olive and orange trees. Outside the walls is the **Foundation Maeght** (✆ **04/93-32-81-63**), considered by some to be the best art museum on the Riviera. Its contemporary art collection includes works by Calder, Giacometti, Miró, Chagall, Matisse, and more. Admission is 7.75€ ($8.90) adults, 6€ ($6.90) kids 12 to 18, free for children under 12.

Some people visit St-Paul-de-Vence solely to dine at **La Colombe d'Or** (✆ **04/93-32-77-78**), once the stomping ground of some of the most important artists of the 20th century. They would trade art for meals and rooms, and the walls and gardens contain works by Picasso, Braque, Miró, Matisse, Léger, Calder, Chagall, and others. Unfortunately, you can't view the collection unless you spring for a meal here. Main courses are 23€ to 36€ ($27–$42). Reservations are required.

For the port of **Le Havre,** see chapter 12, "Ports of Call in Northern Europe & the British Isles."

CURRENCY As of February 2002, France switched entirely to the euro € for its currency. One euro is made up of 100 euro cents. The exchange rate at press time was $1 = .87€.

LANGUAGE French.

FROMMER'S FAVORITE FRENCH RIVIERA EXPERIENCES

- **Shopping for high fashion in Cannes.** Look for famous Paris brands on La Croisette, and more affordable shopping on rue d'Antibes and the streets in between.
- **Heading to the beach in Cannes.** Free public beaches include Plage du Midi and Plage Gazagnaire. There are also private beaches where you pay a fee (usually 18€–20€/$21–$23), for which you get a mattress and a sun umbrella.
- **Visiting the Aquarium in Monte Carlo.** We went to the Oceanographic Museum just to kill some time one day, and discovered a fascinating place with exhibits that include sea dragons and other rare and exotic species. See description below for more info.
- **Playing James Bond at the Monte Carlo Casino.** Put on your tux and indulge in the opulence.
- **Exploring Nice's Old Town.** You'll find a maze of streets teeming with local life, inexpensive restaurants, and boutiques.
- **Climbing up to the cemetery in Nice.** It's a fascinating and scenic place and well worth a visit. Really!
- **Checking out the beaches in St-Tropez.** They're the Riviera's finest. The most daring are the Plage des Salins, Plage de Pampellone, and Plage de Tahiti. If you ever wanted to go topless or bottomless (or just want to gawk at people who are), this is the place.
- **Taking a shore excursion** or spending quiet time in sleepy Villefranche. Close by are Nice, St-Paul-de-Vence, and Eze.

COMING ASHORE & GETTING AROUND Small ships can dock at Monte Carlo, St-Tropez, or Nice. Large ships at the French Riviera ports usually tender passengers ashore. **Taxis** are available at the pier, but are expensive (you may want to double up with other passengers if you're planning to go any distance). You can walk from all the ports to many local attractions. There is also great **train service** from Nice to other locations on the Côte d'Azur.

THE BEST SHORE EXCURSIONS

The best way to explore the French Riviera ports is on foot. You needn't book a shore excursion unless walking is a problem, or you wish to travel to a port other than the one your ship is visiting. If you're looking for something different, you may want to try one of the following.

St-Paul-de-Vence (4 hr.; $52–$58): This medieval walled city offers art galleries and shops, cobblestone streets, cafes, and gorgeous country views. The town has long attracted celebrities, and Gene Wilder and Gilda Radner were married here. The trip may be combined with a visit to Grasse, birthplace of the French perfume industry, and a stop at a perfume factory.

Medieval Eze (3–4 hr.; $45–$68): Eze literally clings to the rocks above the sea, and is a medieval village worth exploring. This tour includes a guided walk through the narrow streets, with their lovely restored houses and stunning views. Time is allowed for shopping in the town's boutiques and artists' studios.

Visits to both St-Paul-de-Vence and Eze may be combined, for a higher fee, with a tour of Nice.

THE TOP ATTRACTIONS

CANNES

Musée de la Castre The collection here includes 19th-century paintings, sculptures, decorative arts, and ethnography, including a gallery devoted to relics of ancient Mediterranean civilizations.

In Château de la Castre, Le Suquet. ✆ **04/93-38-55-26.** Admission 3€ ($3.45) adults, free for students and children. Apr–June Wed–Mon 10am–noon and 2–6pm; July–Sept Wed–Mon 10am–noon and 3–7pm; Oct Wed–Mon 10am–noon and 2–5pm.

MONTE CARLO

Monte Carlo Casino The Casino was built in 1878 by Charles Garnier, the architect who also created the Paris Opera House. It is a very ornate building, but those used to Las Vegas casinos will be surprised at its small size. The atrium is surrounded by 28 Ionic columns made of onyx. The gaming rooms, one leading into the next (you pay more for admission the deeper into the casino you go), feature equally elaborate decor, including gilt, frescoes, and bas-reliefs. Games offered include baccarat, roulette, craps, and blackjack, as well as slot machines (in Salle Américaine).

Place du Casino. ✆ **377-92/16-21-21.** Admission 7.75€–15€ ($8.90–$17), depending on where in the casino you go. Opens daily at noon. No one under 21 is permitted inside. A passport is required to get in, and at night men must wear jacket and tie.

Musée de l'Océanographie This is one of the best aquariums in Europe, displaying rare and unusual sea creatures. The upper floor offers a history of underwater exploration, complete with early scuba gear and a submarine mockup from the 1700s. On the main floor is an aquarium with more than 90 tanks containing such endangered species as the fascinating leafy sea dragon. The museum building is an impressive structure in itself.

Av. St-Martin. ✆ **377-93/15-36-00.** Admission 11€ ($13) adults, 5.20€ ($7.80) children 6–18, free for children 5 and under. July–Aug daily 9am–8pm; Apr–June and Sept daily 9am–7pm; Oct daily 9:30am–7pm.

Palais du Prince Visit the royal palace for a peek into the lifestyle of the ruling Grimaldi family. While the exterior is fortlike, the interior offers an Italianate courtyard and the kind of decorative grand rooms with gold gilt, lush fabrics, and frescoed ceilings that one would expect to find in a royal residence. The tour consists of a recorded commentary, with the tour guide simply pressing a button at each stop (make sure you get on an English tour). You can buy a combo ticket that includes the adjacent museum and archives, but it's hardly worth the time or extra money to do the latter unless you are really into Napoleonic-era relics, of which the museum seems to have an abundance.

Place du Palais. ✆ **377-93/25-18-31.** Admission 6€ ($6.90) adults, 3€ ($3.45) children (for palace only). June–Sept daily 9:30am–6:30pm; Oct daily 10am–5pm.

NICE

Musée des Beaux-Arts Housed in the former residence of the Ukrainian princess Kotchubey, this important gallery is devoted to the masters of the Second Empire and the Belle Epoque, with an extensive collection of 19th-century French artists, including Monet, Renoir, and Rodin.

33 av. Des Baumettes. ✆ **04/92-15-28-28.** Admission 3.75€ ($4.30) adults, free for children 18 and under. Apr 1–Sept 30 Tues–Sun 10am–noon and 2–6pm; Oct 1–Mar 31 Tues–Sun 10am–1pm and 2pm to 5pm.

Musée Matisse Matisse spent the last years of his life in Nice, and the museum offers works donated by the artist and his heirs. Included are *Nude in an Armchair with a Green Plant, Nymph in the Forest,* and *Portrait of Madame Matisse,* as well as practice sketches and designs, and items from the artist's own collection and home.

In Cimiez. Villa des Arénes-de-Cimiez. 164 av. Des Arénes-de-Cimiez. ✆ **04/93-53-40-53.** Admission 3.80€ ($4.35) adults, 2.30€ ($2.65) children and students. Wed–Mon 10am–6pm.

Musée National Message Biblique Marc-Chagall Located in the hills above Nice, this museum is dedicated to the artist's treatment of biblical themes. Chagall and his wife donated the works, which include oils, gouaches, drawings, pastels, lithographs, and sculptures, as well as a mosaic and stained-glass windows. A helpful brochure, available in English, describes biblical themes.

In Cimiez. Av. Du Dr.-Ménard. ✆ **04/93-53-87-20.** Admission 5.50€ ($6.35) adults, free for children, 4€ ($4.60) for students and seniors. Rates may be higher for special exhibitions. July–Sept Wed–Mon 10am–6pm; Oct–Jun Wed–Mon 10am–5pm.

ST-TROPEZ

L'Annonciade Musée St-Tropez This museum, housed in a former chapel, has one of the best modern-art collections on the Riviera, and includes Van Dongen's *Women of the Balustrade* and paintings and sculpture by Bonnard, Matisse, Braque, Utrillo, Seurat, Derain, and Maillol.

Place Georges-Grammont. ✆ **04/94-97-04-01.** Admission 4.50€ ($5.20) adults, 2.25€ ($2.60) children. June–Sept Wed–Mon 10am–noon and 3–7pm; Oct and Dec–May Wed–Mon 10am–noon and 2–6pm. Closed Nov.

VILLEFRANCHE

Romanesque Chapelle St-Pierre Jean Cocteau left his mark here in the form of frescoes paying tribute to gypsies, St. Peter, and the young women of Villefranche.

Quai de la Douane/rue des Mariniéres. ✆ **04/93-76-90-70.** Admission 2.25€ ($2.60). July–Sept Tues–Sun 10am–noon and 4–8:30pm; Oct Tues–Sun 9:30am–noon and 2–5pm; Apr–June Tues–Sun 9:30am–noon and 3–7pm.

LOCAL FLAVORS

Definitely try bouillabaisse, fish stew, and salade Niçoise. Other local specialties include pizza served with onions or olives. Be sure to sample some French wine with your meal. If you have very big bucks (we're talking set-price dinner for 129€–148€/$148–$170 and lunch for 75€/$86), you'll want to eat at **Le Louis XV** in the **Hôtel de Paris** in Monte Carlo (✆ **377-92/16-30-01**), where Alain Ducasse does his six-star magic (both this and his restaurant in Paris received three stars from Michelin). Make reservations well in advance, and expect a good dose of attitude from your wait staff.

Try **Le Safari** (✆ **04/93-80-18-44**), overlooking the Flower Market, for a fun, inexpensive place to dine in Nice. It's open for lunch and dinner. Main courses run 10€ to 23€ ($12–$27). Reservations are highly recommended.

BEST BUYS

Shop at these ports for high-fashion items, artwork, antiques, and items made of colorful Provençal fabrics.

3 Greece

Greece is a spectacular country where ancient sites and architectural treasures join forces with the sun, scenery, and food to make one of the best vacation spots on Earth. It's a feast for the mind and the senses, a place that is exotic but at the same time friendly and familiar, and where there is always something to remind visitors of the past.

CURRENCY As of March 2002, Greece switched entirely to the euro (€) for its currency. One euro is made up of 100 euro cents. The exchange rate at press time was $1 = .87€.

LANGUAGE Greek is the official language, but English and French are widely spoken.

ATHENS

This fabled metropolis is a delightful mix of modern and ancient. The Parthenon and the treasures on display at the National Archaeological Museum best personify the image most of us have of ancient Greece, but interspersed among the ancient monuments, tavernas, and neoclassical buildings are high-rises, fast-food outlets, and plenty of souvenir shops. Modern Athens is crowded, teeming with inhabitants, traffic, and taxis (although getting one can be a challenge). The city is also polluted and grows unbelievably hot during the summer. To appreciate both sides of Athens, explore it slowly, and get resigned to the fact that you won't have time to see everything. Climb to the Parthenon, enjoy a leisurely lunch at an outside cafe, get caught in the hustle and bustle of the streets, and savor the moments spent in the birthplace of western civilization. In 2004, visitors will have the added benefit of Olympic fever, with the 2004 Games to be held in Athens in August. The city—and whole country for that matter—has been spiffing up for the event, renovating buildings and landmarks and adding a modern subway system, new roadways, and even new hotels.

FROMMER'S FAVORITE ATHENS EXPERIENCES

- **Strolling around the Plaka.** The Plaka is the oldest neighborhood in Athens. As you wander its narrow streets you will come upon quaint single-story homes, neoclassical buildings, tavernas, nightclubs, and souvenir shops. It's easy to get lost in the maze of streets here, but along the way you may spot an ancient monument or a fascinating neighborhood church.
- **Going museum-hopping.** The National Archaeological Museum is enormous and can easily occupy a few hours. There are also several small museums worth a look (see below).
- **Visiting the National Gardens.** Located next to the Parliament House is the former royal family's palace garden. Visitors will find a park, a small zoo, shady trees, benches, a cafe, and small lakes and ponds with ducks, swans, and even peacocks. The garden is open daily from 7am to 10pm, but don't linger here alone at night.

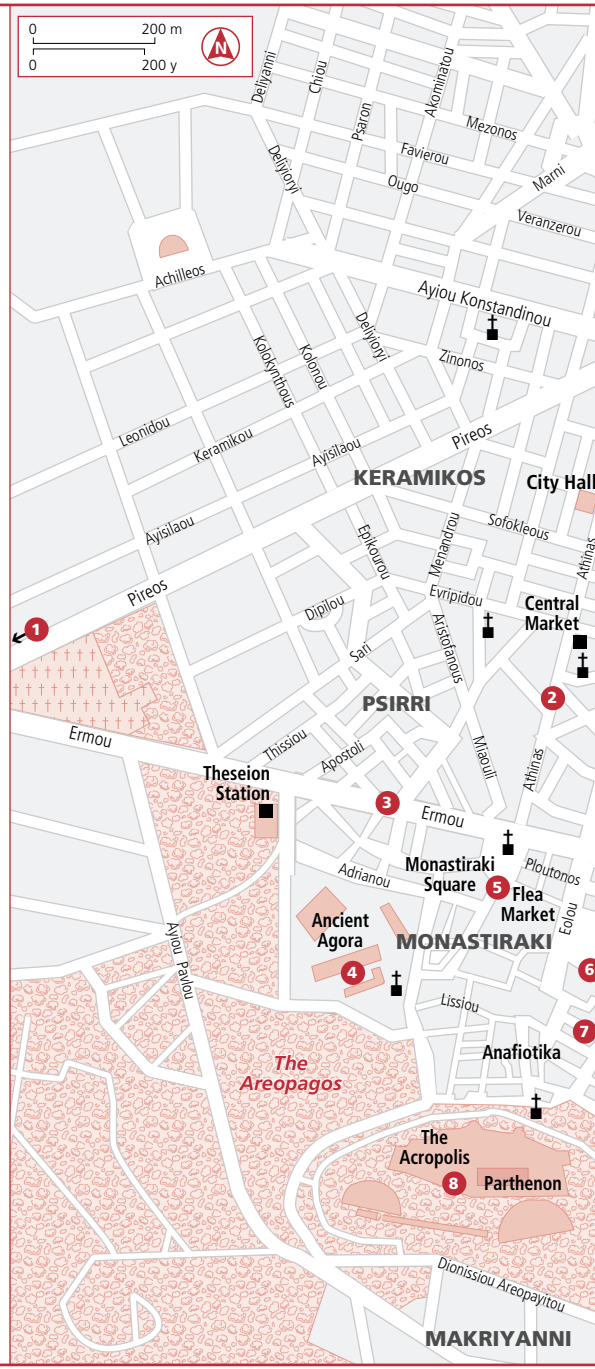
COMING ASHORE & GETTING AROUND Cruise ships dock at the port city of **Piraeus,** about 11km (7 miles) southwest of Athens. There's not much to do in Piraeus, so you'll want to head into Athens. You can take a **metro train** or **taxi** into the city, and most cruise lines also offer a **bus service** (for a fee). We recommend the train, which you can walk to from the pier. It costs about a quarter. If you're taking a taxi, try to bargain with the driver. The average fare from Piraeus to Syntagma Square in Athens should be about 7.75€ ($8.90), but

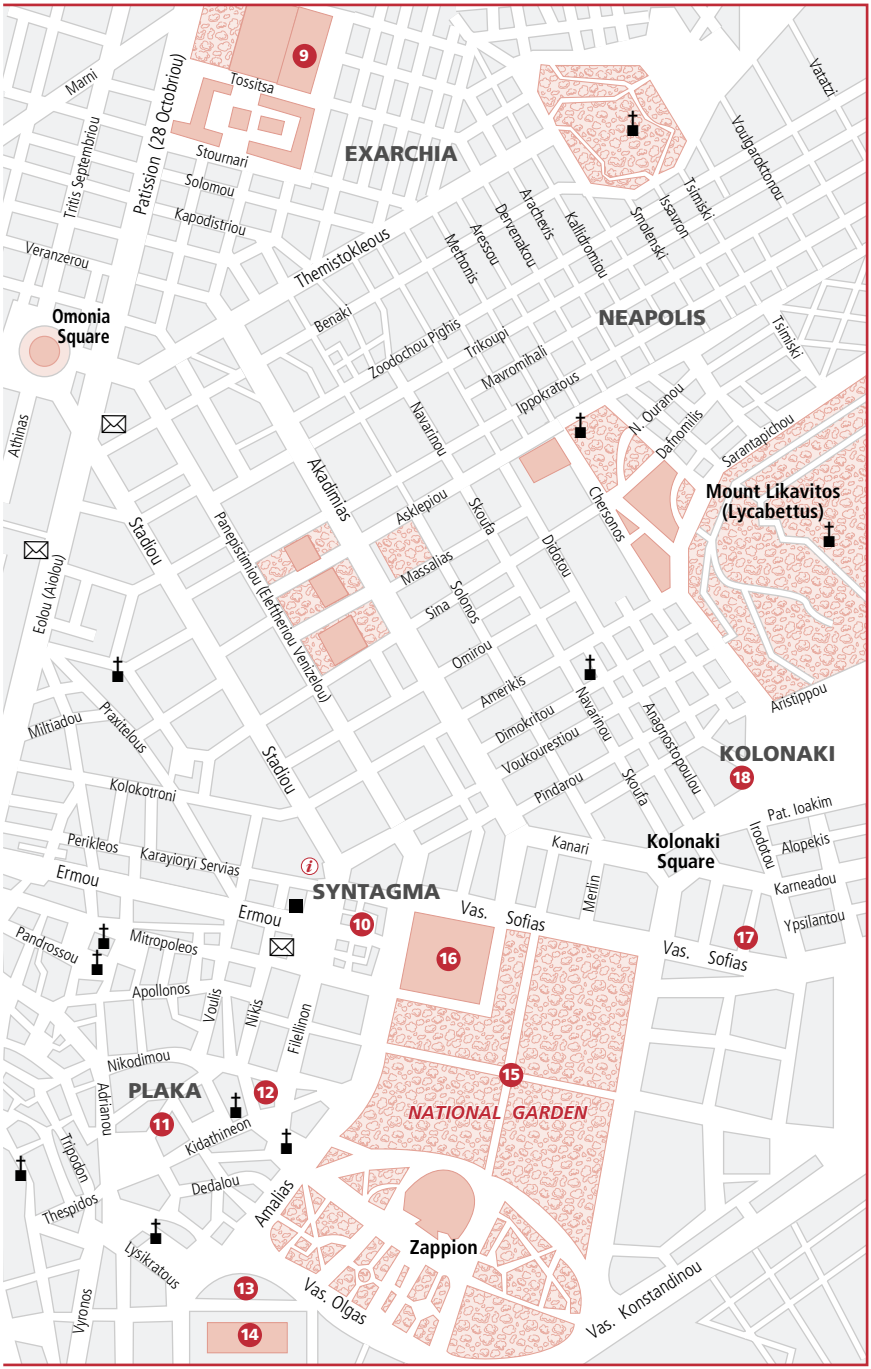
Athens



- Acropolis **8**
- Ancient Agora **4**
- Athens Street **2**
- Constitution Square **10**
- Ermou Street **3**
- Greek Folk Art Museum **12**
- Hadrian's Arch **13**
- Kolonaki **18**
- Monastiraki **5**
- Museum of Greek Popular Musical Instruments **6**
- National Archeological Museum **9**
- National Gardens **15**
- N.P.Goulandris Foundation Museum of Cycladic Art **17**
- Parliament House **16**
- Piraeus **1**
- The Plaka **11**
- Piatanos Taverna **7**
- Syntagma Square **10**
- Temple of Zeus **14**






EXARCHIA
NEAPOLIS
SYNTAGMA
PLAKA
KOLONAKI
NATIONAL GARDEN
Zappion
Omonia Square
Kolonaki Square
Mount Likavitos (Lycabettus)
Marni
Tossitsa
Patission (28 Octobriou)
Stournari
Solomou
Kapodistriou
Tritis Septembriou
Veranzerou
Themistokleous
Benaki
Zoodochou Pigkis
Trikoupi
Mavromihali
Ippokratous
Methonis
Aressou
Dervenakou
Atzcheviis
Kallidromiou
Snolenski
Isavron
Tsimiski
Voulgaroktonou
Vatatzi
Navarinou
Akadimias
Asklepiou
Skoufa
Didotou
Chersonos
N. Ouranou
Dafnomilis
Sarantapichou
Athinas
Stadiou
Panepistimiou (Eleftheriou Venizelou)
Massalias
Sina
Solonos
Omirou
Amerikis
Dimokritou
Voukouresiou
Pindarou
Anagnostopoulou
Aristippou
Eolou (Aiolou)
Miltiadou
Praxitelous
Kolokotroni
Perikleos
Karayioryi Servias
Ermou
Mitropoleos
Pandrossou
Apollonos
Voulis
Nikis
Filellinon
Nikodimou
Adrianou
Kidathineon
Tripodon
Thespidos
Dedalou
Amalias
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Vas. Olgas
Vas. Konstandinou
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Iodotou
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many drivers will quote a flat rate, which can be as high as 19€ ($22). You can pay it or try to find another taxi driver willing to turn on the meter. The trip can take a while if there's bad traffic (which there often is here).

Note that drivers here will not always accept you as a fare. They will ask where you are going and are free to decline if they are not going your way. Consequently, it sometimes takes a fair amount of time to find a cab (so plan accordingly). It is also not uncommon for a driver to stop and pick up two or three different parties to fill the cab. If this happens, you are only responsible for your leg of the journey.

THE BEST SHORE EXCURSIONS

Athens City Tour (3½–5 hr.; $50–$89): Includes a guided tour of the Acropolis; a drive past other Athens highlights, including Constitution Square, the Parliament, the Temple of Zeus, Hadrian's Arch, and Olympic Stadium; and time for souvenir shopping. A full-day city tour (8½ hr.; $92–$99) also includes a visit to the National Archaeological Museum, time to shop in the Plaka, and lunch.

A Day Tour of Delphi (9½–10½ hr.; $96–$109): If you've been to Athens before or just aren't into big cities and crowds, you may want to try this day trip to one of the great sights of antiquity. The tour visits the ruins of the Temple of Apollo, located in a stunning setting on the slope of Mount Parnassus. Lunch is included.

THE TOP ATTRACTIONS

The Acropolis For many centuries, the Acropolis—the heights above Athens—was the religious center of Athens, and in various times it's served as the seat of a king and the home of gods and goddesses. The most striking structures are the Parthenon (the most recognized Greek monument, dedicated to Athena), the Propylaea (the gateway to the Acropolis), the Temple of Athena Nike (built in the 5th century B.C. and restored in the 1930s), and the Erechtheion (honored by Athenians as the tomb of Erechtheus, a legendary king of Athens, and noteworthy for its delicate carving). Visitors may be disappointed to find that they cannot enter the Parthenon due to preservation and restoration efforts. However, leave plenty of time to explore the Acropolis and the museum. In the summer, if possible, start out early in the morning, when the sun is not at its strongest and the crowds are not as overwhelming.

Enter on the west end of the site, accessible from a path off Dioskouon and Theorias sts. ✆ **210/321-4172.** Admission 12€ ($14) adults, 6€ ($6.90) students, which includes same-day admission to the National Archaeological Museum. Free admission on Sun. Admission includes entrance to the Acropolis Museum, which is sometimes open different hours than the site. Open daily in the summer (8am–7pm) and winter (8:30am–2:30pm).

Ancient Agora The Agora, a jumble of ancient buildings, inscriptions, and fragments of sculpture, served as a political and commercial center of Athens. The two best ruins are the Hephaisteion (a temple to Hephaisos built in the 5th century B.C.) and the reconstructed Stoa of Attalos, which serves as a museum.

Below the Acropolis on the edge of Monastiraki. ✆ **210/321-0185.** Admission 4.40€ ($5) adults, 3.30€ ($3.80) seniors, 2.20€ ($2.50) students. Tues–Sun 8:30am–3pm.

Greek Folk Art Museum This small museum showcases pieces dating from 1650 to the present, including embroidery, costumes, silver and metal works, pottery, and wood and stone carvings, as well as paintings by Theophilos Hatzimichail.

Tips Visiting the Archaeological Highlights

There is a special one-day ticketing package for the archaeological sites of Athens—which includes the Acropolis site and museum, ancient agora, theatre of Dionysos, Kerameikos, Olympieion, and Roman agora; adults, 12€ ($14), 6€ ($6.90) students and seniors. The package can be purchased at the Acropolis Museum.

Odos Kidathineon 17, Plaka. ✆ **210/322-9031.** Admission 2€ ($2.30) adults, 1€ ($1.15) students. Summer hours Mon noon–7pm, Tues–Sun 8am–7pm; winter hours Tues–Sun 8:30am–3pm.

Museum of Greek Popular Musical Instruments There are about 1,200 musical instruments in the collection (dating from the 18th century–present). The museum is housed in the Lassanis Mansion, built in 1842. Recitals are held in the museum's garden.

Odos Dioyenous 1–3. ✆ **210/325-0198.** Free admission. Tues and Thurs–Sun 10am–2pm; Wed noon–6pm.

The National Archaeological Museum This large museum takes time to navigate and is quite popular, so it's best to get there early so you'll be able to see the exhibits rather than the backs of fellow museum-goers. The museum contains collections from prehistoric times, pottery and Minoan art, sculpture, bronzes, and Egyptian art.

Odos Pattision 44. ✆ **210/821-7717.** Admission 6€ ($6.90), 3€ ($3.45) students, which includes same-day admission to the Acropolis. Summer Tues–Thurs 8am–3pm, Fri–Sun 8am–7pm; winter Mon 10:30am–5pm, Tues–Sun 8:30am–3pm (but double-check, as hours are subject to change).

N. P. Goulandris Foundation Museum of Cycladic Art This attractive museum is the home of the second largest collection of art from the Cyclades, a group of about 200 islands in the Aegean, between the years 3200 and 2000 B.C. The Greek artifact collection includes jewelry, glass, and metal ware, pottery, and figurines from the 3rd millennium B.C. to the 4th century A.D.

Odos Neofytou Douka 4. ✆ **210/722-8321.** Admission 2.20€ ($2.50) adults, .70€ (80¢) children. Mon and Wed–Fri 10am–4pm; Sun 10am–3pm.

LOCAL FLAVORS

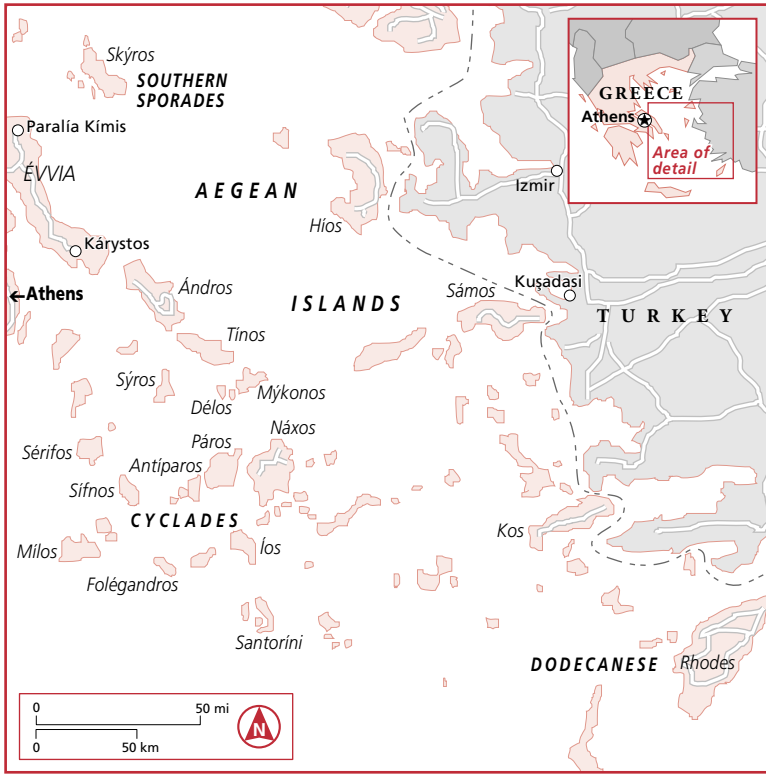
Most Greek meals start off with *mezedes* (appetizers). Items can range from grilled *oktapodi* (octopus) to *keftedes* (meatballs) to *tzatziki* (yogurt dip with cucumber and garlic). Other items include *kalamaraki* (squid), feta (white goat cheese), and *spanakopita* (spinach pies).

Typical main dishes are *moussaka* (layers of eggplant, minced meat, and potatoes topped with a cheese sauce and baked), *pastitsio* (macaroni baked with minced meat and béchamel sauce), *gemista* (either tomatoes or green peppers stuffed with minced meat or rice), *dolmades* (cabbage or vine leaves stuffed with minced meat or rice and served with an egg and lemon sauce), and *souvlakia* (pieces of meat on small skewers).

Baklava, a honey-drenched pastry with nuts, is a popular dessert that is sticky and sweet. Ouzo is a traditional Greek liquor.

Some of the quaintest restaurants in the city can be found in the Plaka, but there are also some real tourist traps in that area. Don't frequent a place where waiters are standing outside to pull you in. Also avoid places with floor shows.

The Greek Isles



A good traditional taverna is **Platanos Taverna,** Odos Dioyenous 4 (✆ **01/322-0666**), which is open for both lunch and dinner and offers outdoor tables in good weather. "Home cooking" has been served here since 1932. Especially great are the artichokes or spinach with lamb, and the house wine is pretty good too. Main courses are about 7.20€ to 9.95€ ($8.30–$11).

BEST BUYS

Shop Athens for gold and silver jewelry, icons, leather goods, ceramics, kitchenware, *komboloi* (worry beads), and blue-and-white amulets (for warding off evil spirits).

Ermou Street is the place for women's fashion. **Kolonaki** is the place to head for designer boutiques and shoe stores. Kitchenware and household items can be found on **Athenas Street,** while **Monastraki,** the area adjacent to the Plaka, is known for its flea market, most lively on Sundays (but open every day). Keep in mind that not everything sold as an antique is genuine. Also, it's illegal to take antiquities and icons more than 100 years old out of the country without an export license, which is difficult to obtain.

MYKONOS

The landscape of this island's main town, **Hora,** dazzles with whitewashed homes, their doors and window frames painted brightly, and a harbor lined with fishing boats. Pelicans, the mascots of Mykonos, greet passengers at the pier.

Hora (Mykonos Town)



There is a charming quality here despite the large numbers of sunseekers, the party-town reputation (especially in July and Aug), and the inevitable souvenir shops. As you navigate the cobblestone streets, you'll encounter windmills; small, blue-domed churches; and outdoor cafes.

Unlike other Greek islands visited by cruise ships, Mykonos is not a setting for ancient ruins. Those starving for sacred sights of note can catch a shore excursion to nearby **Delos,** the birthplace of Apollo.

Mykonos's second town is **Ano Mera,** about 6.4km (4 miles) east of Hora, where you'll find a more traditional ambience and some religious sites of note. The **Monastery of Panayia Tourliani** dates to 1580 and has a handsomely carved steeple, as well as a small religious museum inside. Nearby is the 12th-century **Monastery of Paleokastro,** one of the greenest spots on the island.

FROMMER'S FAVORITE MYKONOS EXPERIENCES

- **Hitting the beach.** Paradise, the island's original nude beach, is its most famous. Other notable stretches include Kalafatis and Ayios Sostis.
- **Having an undersea adventure.** Mykonos is the place for diving in the Aegean, especially in September. The best-known diving center is at **Psarou Beach** (✆ and fax **0289/24-808;** diving_center_psarou@myk.forthnet.gr).

COMING ASHORE & GETTING AROUND Ships tender passengers to the main harbor area along the Esplanade in Hora. The best way to get around town is to walk. Much of the rest of the island is served by a good **bus** system. The central bus station is located off the left of the harbor. Bus routes go to all the beaches from Hora. There are also two types of **taxis.** The standard cab, which you can find at Taxi (Mavro) Square, can take you outside of town. There's a notice board at the square with rates. Small motor scooter taxis also zip through the narrow streets of Hora, which by government decree is an architectural landmark where cars are not allowed. These can be found at the pier.

THE BEST SHORE EXCURSIONS

Delos Apollo Sanctuary (3–4½ hr.; $37–$63): Travel by small boat from Mykonos harbor to Delos for a 2-hour guided walking tour of the tiny island that was once the religious and commercial hub of the Aegean, but now is home only to ancient ruins and their caretakers. View the Agora; the Sacred Way, which leads to the Temple of Apollo; and the Avenue of Lions, where five marble beasts from the 7th century B.C. guard the now-dry Sacred Lake. View the remains of the Hellenistic Quarter with its harbors, waterhouses, and villas, including the House of Cleopatra, and the renowned mosaic floors in the House of the Dolphin, the House of the Masks, and the House of Dionysos. Also visit the Archaeological Museum.

THE TOP ATTRACTIONS

The town of Hora itself, with its quaint houses, churches, and alleys, is the main attraction here. The best thing to do is simply wander about, heading inland from the pier and meandering (and enjoying getting lost) along the labyrinth of streets, looking at the art galleries, jewelry, and other gift shops, or stopping at a cafe or bar. The town is like a picture postcard.

LOCAL FLAVORS

There are many quaint cafes and charming restaurants. Worth visiting is **Edem Restaurant** in Hora (✆ **0289/22-855**). It is known both for its meat dishes and

great service, and is located above Panahrandou church—walk up Matoyianni, turn left on Kaloyera, and follow the signs up and to the left. Open for lunch and dinner. Main courses cost 11€ to 18€ ($13–$21).

BEST BUYS

Mykonos boasts a large community of artists, with many galleries selling their work. Gold jewelry can be found throughout the island.

RHODES

Rich in history, this island is dotted with beautiful beaches, mountain villages, and fertile plains. Its most famous inhabitants were the Knights of St. John, who arrived in 1291 after fleeing Jerusalem. They reigned for more than 2 centuries, and their legacy lives on in **Rhodes Town.** The city is now made up of the New Town and the Old Town. Within the medieval walls of the Old Town are treasures from the Knights, while the New Town boasts a happening nighttime scene with its bars, discos, and tavernas.

Lindos, a picturesque village about 50 minutes from Rhodes Town, boasts the Acropolis at Lindos, which rises about 120m (400 ft.) above the town on a beautiful bay.

FROMMER'S FAVORITE RHODES EXPERIENCES

- **Exploring Old Town.** This section of the city is home to medieval treasures, charming rooftop cafes, and plenty of shops. To appreciate its many offerings, walk through its maze of streets. Main attractions include the Hospital of the Knights, the Streets of the Knights, and the Palace of the Grand Masters.
- **Visiting Lindos.** This picturesque village boasts the island's top archaeological site (the Acropolis) as well as traditional white-walled homes and cobblestone streets.
- **Soaking up the sun.** The island is known for its great beaches, with some of the best located on the east coast. Faliaraki, about 20 minutes from Rhodes Town, is one of the island's most popular (admission is 3.90€/$4.50).

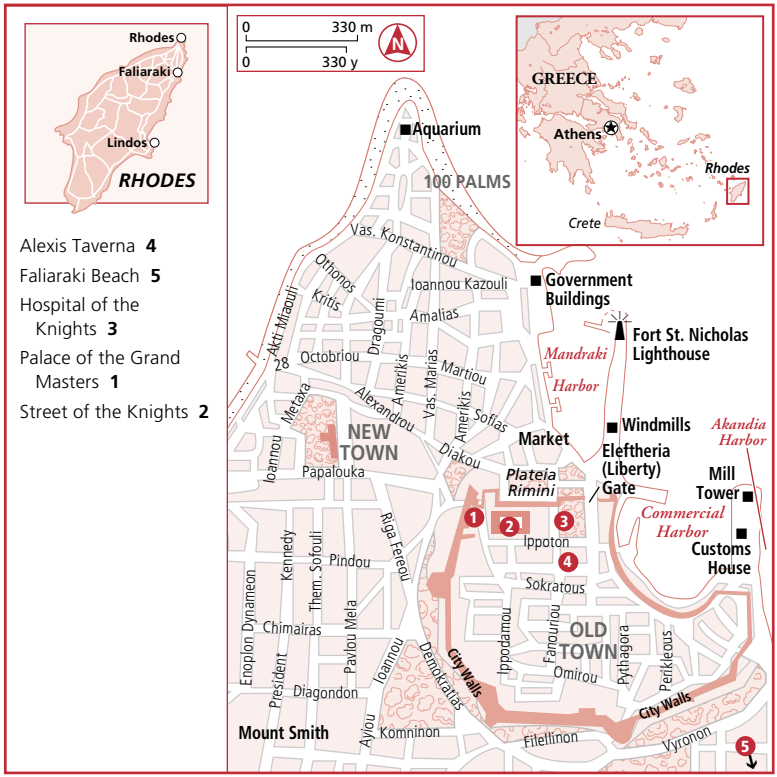
COMING ASHORE & GETTING AROUND Ships dock at the commercial harbor, which is within walking distance of Rhodes Town's old section. The New Town is also within walking distance, but there is more to see in the Old Town.

To explore the island of Rhodes, transportation is required. Buses, rental cars, or motor scooters are available near the harbor. **Taxis** wait at the end of the pier. Negotiate fares with taxi drivers for sightseeing; the hourly rate is 28€ to 39€ ($32–$45).

THE BEST SHORE EXCURSIONS

Rhodes & Lindos (4–4½ hr.; $49–$56): Travel by bus through the scenic countryside to Lindos, an important city in ancient times. At Lindos, view the medieval walls, which were constructed by the Knights of St. John in the 14th century. Walk or ride a donkey up to the ancient Acropolis, where there are ruins and great views (you'll pass souvenir shops on the way). The trip may include a walking tour of Old Town Rhodes (see description above), a stop at a workshop selling Rhodian ceramics, and/or a visit to Mount Smith to view the ruins of ancient Rhodes, the Temple of Apollo, and Diagoras Stadium.

Rhodes Town



Lindos with Lunch by the Beach (8 hr.; $79–$109): Drive to Lindos and explore the city (see above). Continue on to a secluded beach for some swimming and sunning. Changing facilities, restrooms, and showers are available. Lunch is at a beachfront restaurant. Return to Rhodes, driving along the walls of the medieval city and stopping at Port d'Amboise for a walk through Old Town. View the Palace of the Knights and the medieval houses, as well as the Hospital of the Knights of St. John. The tour may stop at a ceramics workshop to view how Rhodian ceramics are made.

THE TOP ATTRACTIONS

The Hospital of the Knights The 15th-century Hospital of the Knights is now the home of the Archaeological Museum, with a collection that features fine works from the Mycenaean and Roman eras.

Old Town. ✆ **02/41-276-57.** Admission 2.20€ ($2.50). Summer daily 8:30am–6pm; winter daily 8:30am–3pm.

Mandraki Harbor The Colossus of Rhodes, a 30m (100-ft.) tall bronze statue of the sun god Helios and one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, was erected somewhere here. (Legend has it that the statue straddled the harbor, but more likely it was erected off to one side.)

New Town.

The Palace of the Grand Masters This is the palace and fortress that dominates the Old Town. The floors are covered with mosaics from the island of Kos, and the palace features two permanent exhibitions about Rhodes.

Old Town. ✆ **02/41-756-74.** Admission 3.50€ ($4). July–Oct and holidays Mon noon–7pm, Tues–Sun 8am–7pm; winter Tues–Sun 8:30am–3pm.

The Street of the Knights The cobblestone street (noted on maps as "Ippoton") leads to the Palace of the Grand Masters and is where the inns of the various nations of the Knights of St. John were located. The inns served as clubs and meeting places for the knights, and their facades mirror the architectural styles of the various countries.

Old Town.

LOCAL FLAVORS

There are plenty of places in the Old Town and New Town to enjoy a meal, and the best bet at any of the restaurants is seafood. One of the top choices is **Alexis Taverna,** Odos Sokratous 18, in Old Town (✆ **0241/29-347**). Among those who have dined here are Winston Churchill and Jacqueline Kennedy, as well as assorted royalty. Reservations are recommended. Specially designed dinners run about 44€ ($50) without wine.

BEST BUYS

Head to the Old Town for good buys on gold and silver jewelry, leather goods and furs, sea sponges, lace, and carpets and kilims.

SANTORINI

Dotted with whitewashed homes, black-pebble beaches, rich vineyards, and ancient ruins, Santorini is one of the most breathtaking islands in the world, and approaching it by ship is a dramatic experience. Ships enter the **caldera,** a central crater that was formed when a volcano erupted in 1500 B.C. Ash fell on the remaining land, burying the cosmopolitan city of **Akrotiri,** an event that some believe sparked the legend of the lost continent of Atlantis.

Fira, the capital of Santorini, lives up to its picture-postcard reputation. The city is about 300m (1,000 ft.) above sea level. Along its winding streets are shops, cafes, and art galleries.

Ia (also called **Oia**) is an artist's colony located about 10 to 15 minutes from Fira. The city is quite picturesque, with charming homes and galleries showcasing modern and folk art and traditional handicrafts.

FROMMER'S FAVORITE SANTORINI EXPERIENCES

- **Watching the sunset.** The best spots are from the ramparts of Lontza Castle in Ia, the *volta* (stroll) in Fira, or the footpath between Fira and Ia (see below).
- **Walking from Fira to Ia.** If you're a hiker, there's a 10km (6¼-mile) pedestrian path that follows the edge of the caldera and offers stunning views. Along the way, you pass several churches and climb two substantial hills.

COMING ASHORE & GETTING AROUND Ships tender passengers to the port of Skala, and visitors have three options to reach town: by donkey, by cable car, or on foot. The **donkey and cable car rides** cost about 2.75€ ($3.15) each way. The walk up the 587 steps is the same route the donkeys take. Word to the wise: Donkeys are fed at the bottom of the hill, so they tend to run down whether they are carrying someone or not. They are also very smelly. Cable cars run every

20 minutes; walking takes about 30 minutes (depending on the individual). Donkey rides take about 20 to 30 minutes depending on traffic and availability.

The city of Fira can be easily explored by foot. **Taxis** and **buses** are available to take you to other parts of the island. A cab ride to Ia takes about 10 to 15 minutes and costs 11€ to 13€ ($13–$15) one-way; a cab ride to the ruins of Akrotiri is about 30 minutes (make sure you make return arrangements with the driver). Buses cost 1.70€ to 3.30€ ($1.95–$3.80) each way. You can also rent a **moped** (11€–22€/$13–$22 per day) but it is not the safest way of getting around—the roads on this island are notoriously treacherous.

THE BEST SHORE EXCURSIONS

Akrotiri Excavations & Fira Town (3 hr.; $56–$69): This tour takes you to Akrotiri, an excavation site that dates back to the 2nd millennium B.C. You are then dropped off in Fira, where you'll have time to shop or stroll through town before catching a cable car ride or mule back down the slope to the ship.

Village of Ia (4 hr.; $54): Walk through the picturesque narrow cobblestone streets of this small village perched on a cliff. Stop at the Boutari Winery in the nearby village of Megalochoris for a tasting including a rare white wine made locally. The visit also includes a multimedia presentation about Santorini. The tour ends in Fira.

THE TOP ATTRACTIONS

Ancient Akrotiri Excavations at Akrotiri, an ancient city that was preserved under a layer of volcanic ash 3,600 years ago, began in 1967 and are ongoing, giving visitors a glimpse of urban life in the Minoan period. Archaeologists have uncovered streets, houses, art, and magnificent frescoes, which are now on display at the National Archaeological Museum in Athens. It's best to take a guided tour here (as offered by the cruise lines), but guidebooks are available at the site. Also, try to visit in the morning, when it's cooler.

Akrotiri. ✆ **0286/81-366.** Admission 5€ ($5.75) adults, 3€ ($3.45) students and seniors. Daily 7:30am–7pm. Free admission 1st Sunday of every month (except holidays).

Ancient Thira The extensive Hellenic, Roman, and Byzantine ruins of Ancient Thira stand on Mesa Vouna, and can be brought to life with the assistance of a good tour guide. From this perch, you get incredible views of Santorini and its neighbor islands. Two popular beaches, Kamari and Perissa, lie on either side of the mesa.

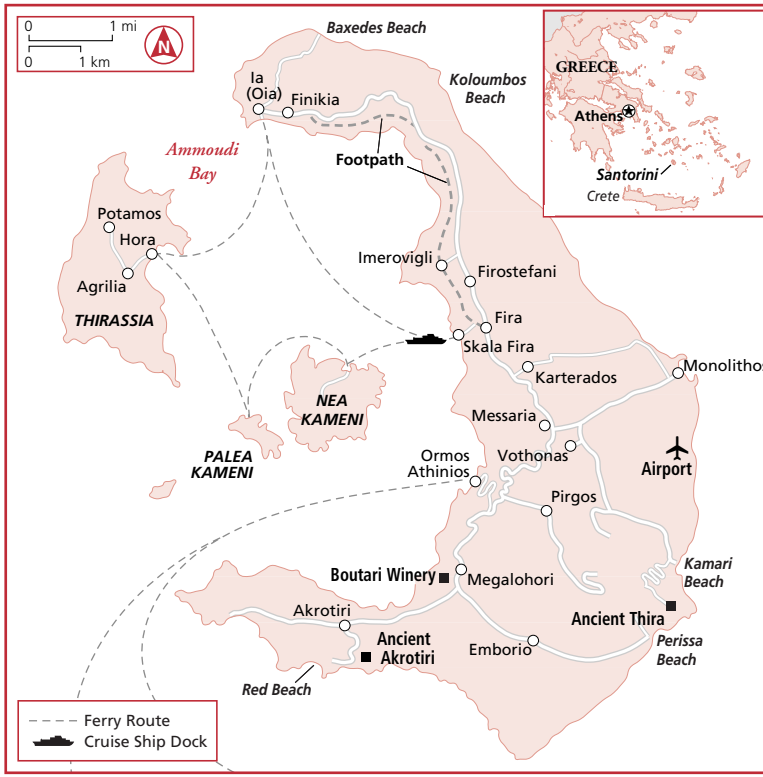
Kamari, 84700. ✆ **0286/31-66.** Admission 5€ ($5.75) adults, 3€ ($3.45) students. Tues–Sun 8:30am–3pm.

LOCAL FLAVORS

Watching the sunset from a cafe on the caldera is a popular pastime in Santorini. **Franco's** is the most popular spot, but drinks are expensive (nearly 8.85€/$10 a pop). Nearby, **Tropical** also has a good view but charges less. Arrive early to get a good seat outside: Have a drink, and wait for the show to begin.

Tips Visiting Archaeological Sites

A special one-day ticketing package covers the Archaeological Museum, the Museum of Prehistoric Thira, and the Archaeological Sites of Ancient Akrotiri and Ancient Thira, 8€ ($9.20), 4€ ($4.60) students, 3€ ($3.45) seniors, free admission children. Tickets are sold at any of these sites.



In Fira, prices are higher at restaurants near the cable car station. Some of the city's finer establishments are located near the cathedral on Odos Ipapantis.

BEST BUYS

Jewelry prices in Fira are a tad higher than those in Athens, but there is a good selection. One of the better-known jewelers is **Kostas Antoniou** on Odos Ayiou Ioannou, north of the cable car station (✆ **0286/22-633**).

4 Italy

If you ask 10 people what their favorite country is in Europe, our guess is that 8 of them will say Italy. You can eat great food, talk to friendly people, and shop for the latest fashions; see some of the ancient world's most famous ruins, like the Forum in Rome and the ancient city of Pompeii; immerse yourself in the Renaissance in Florence; and be part of living history in Venice.

This is the land of Leonardo and Michelangelo, of Caesar and the Popes. And whether you are drawn to the treasure trove of artwork, the incredible architecture, the religious significance, the gorgeous scenery, the wonderful pasta, or all of the above, Italy, with its sense of *la dolce vita,* is bound to deliver.

CURRENCY As of March 2002, Italy switched entirely to the euro (€) for its currency. One euro is made up of 100 euro cents. The exchange rate at press time was $1 = .87€.

LANGUAGE Italian.

CIVITAVECCHIA/ROME

Civitavecchia has served as the port of Rome since Emperor Trajan declared it such in A.D. 108.

Cruise ships shuttle passengers from here to Rome, about 90 minutes away, by bus. Civitavecchia itself, with its mostly post–World War II architecture, hasn't attracted much tourist attention. But the city did invest big bucks during the Jubilee Year (2000) in its cruise facilities and renovating its few landmarks, including the Vanvitelli fountain, the Roman dock of Lazaretto, and its ancient walls.

There is also shopping in town (keep in mind most shops close in the afternoon for a long lunch period) as well as some decent restaurants on the waterfront.

FROMMER'S FAVORITE CIVITAVECCHIA EXPERIENCES

- **Taking a shore excursion to Rome.** There is nothing in Civitavecchia that comes close to the Roman Colosseum, the Vatican, and other amazing landmarks.

COMING ASHORE & GETTING AROUND From the pier, it's about a 15-minute walk to town, or a 5-minute cab ride. **Taxis** are usually available at the pier. The drive to Rome is about 90 minutes. There is also **train** service to Rome. The train station is in town, and the train ride takes about an hour (depending on the time of day, service is hourly or twice hourly).

THE BEST SHORE EXCURSIONS

In addition to the excursion below, most ships offer a bus transfer so you can explore Rome on your own for $56 to $69. Some offer the option of a half-day on your own and a half-day of group touring for $75 to $92.

Rome City Tour (9½–11 hr.; $135–$182): This comprehensive tour includes visits to the Colosseum, the greatest architectural remnant of ancient Rome; and the Vatican, including the Bernini-designed Piazza San Pietro, magnificent St. Peter's Basilica, and the Vatican Museum, with its remarkable Sistine Chapel (bring binoculars). Also drive past such landmarks as the remains of the Roman Forum, Trajan's Column, the Arch of Constantine, and the Circus Maximus. The tour may also include a short walk to see Trevi Fountain.

THE TOP ATTRACTIONS

There's not really much to see in Civitavecchia. Head to Rome instead to see the attractions mentioned above.

LOCAL FLAVORS

There are restaurants and trattorias on Civitavecchia's waterfront, serving pasta, seafood, and pizza.

BEST BUYS

Shop in Civitavecchia for shoes and other leather goods. There are a number of good stores on the main street (though not as good as what you'll find in Rome). In the morning, it's also fun to poke around the market, located behind the main street.

LIVORNO

This major port city is the gateway to Florence, the birthplace of the Italian Renaissance, which is about a 2-hour drive away. It is also a port of choice for

cruise lines because of its close proximity to Pisa and the leaning tower thereof, and as an entry to the Tuscany region with its famous Chianti vineyards, cypress trees, and olive groves.

There's not much happening in the way of tourist attractions in Livorno itself, but you can shop here for olive oil and Chianti and enjoy a typical Tuscan meal.

FROMMER'S FAVORITE LIVORNO EXPERIENCES

- **Taking the shore excursion to Florence.** Or you can take the shuttle and explore Florence on your own.

COMING ASHORE & GETTING AROUND Ships dock about 1.6km (1 mile) from the center of town. **Taxis** are usually available at the pier. Florence is a 2-hour drive, or about an hour and a quarter by **train** (the train station is about a 15-min. cab or bus ride from the pier). Pisa is only 19km (12 miles) away, and also accessible by train (the ride takes about 25 min.).

THE BEST SHORE EXCURSIONS

Florence City Tour (9–10 hr.; $89–$165): It's a 2-hour drive to the edge of the city center, where buses have to park, with the rest of the tour on foot. Visit the Galleria dell'Accademia, Europe's first drawing school, to view Michelangelo's sculptures, including *David;* the Duomo, the tremendous cathedral (it's the fourth largest church in the world); the Campanile, the 15th-century bell tower; Piazza della Signoria, the city's main square; and the 13th-century Church of Santa Croce. Lunch and shopping time are included. Some tours also make a photo stop at Pisa. (Ships also offer transfers to Florence for $69–$75, for those who want to explore on their own.)

The Leaning Tower of Pisa (3 hr.; $37–$46): Only 19km (12 miles) from Livorno, Pisa is home of the famous Leaning Tower. Galileo is said to have used the 54m (180-ft.) tower for his gravitational experiments. Be aware, however, that admittance to the recently reopened tower is not included on most shore excursions. The itinerary also covers the Baptistery and Campo Santo, along with time for souvenir shopping.

LOCAL FLAVORS

You can try Livorno's excellent, hearty Tuscan cuisine at one of the trattorias or at the fancier hotels. Sample pastas, cheeses, and simply prepared meat and fish, a main ingredient being the region's wonderful olive oil. Complement your meal with a glass of Chianti, especially the highly regarded Chianti Classico, or other Tuscan wines.

BEST BUYS

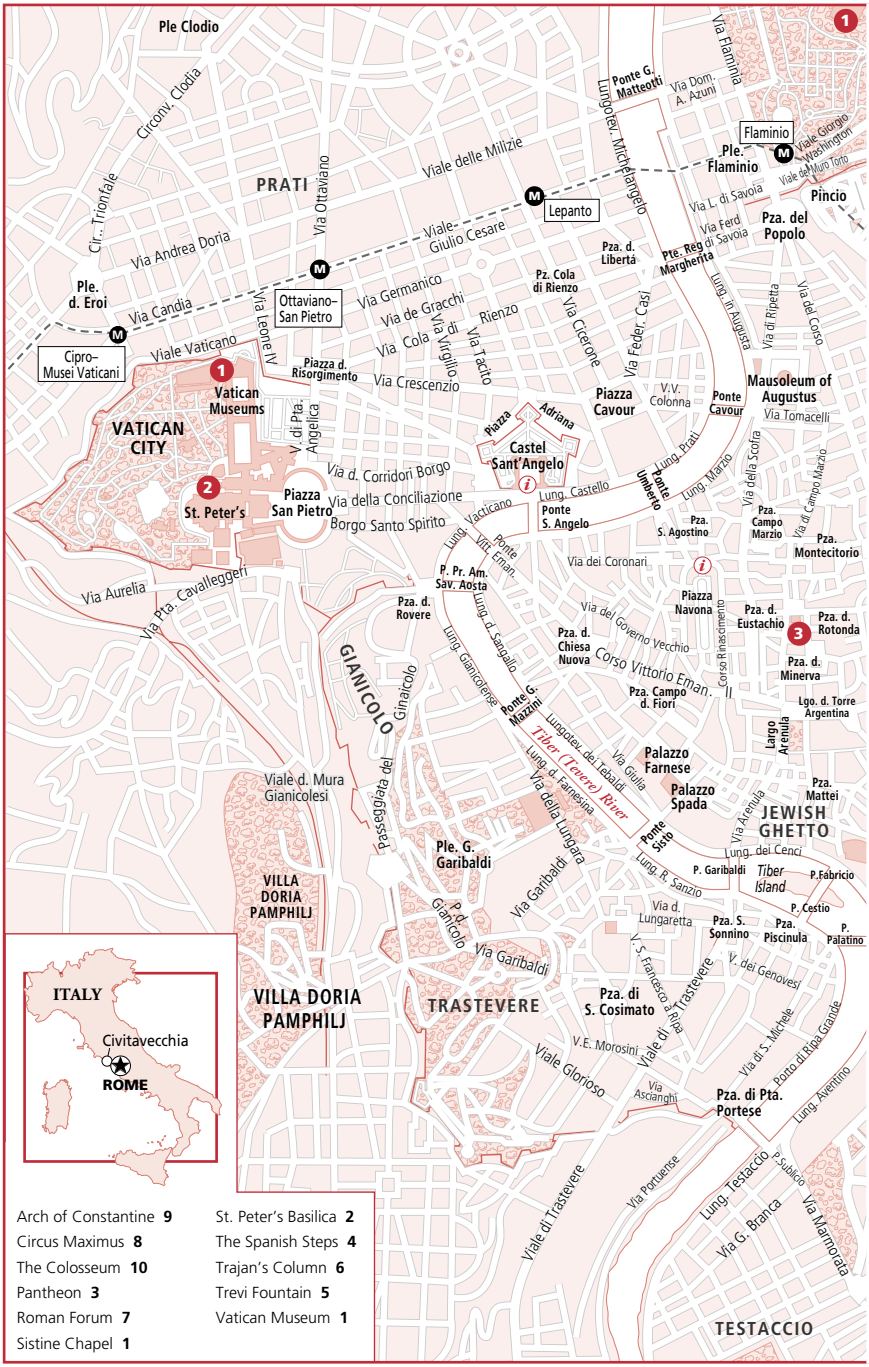
There are shops along the Via Grande, Livorno's main street; most close from 12:30 to 3:30pm. In addition to Chianti, best buys include the locally produced amber-colored olive oil.

SORRENTO

Known as the City of Sirens (those lovely mermaids who lured seamen to death with their pretty songs), Sorrento has for centuries been a favorite resort of wealthy Romans. It's dramatically located on top of a cliff overlooking the ocean. It's a charming town with great shops and quaint streets, although it can get very crowded and snarled with traffic in the summer high season.

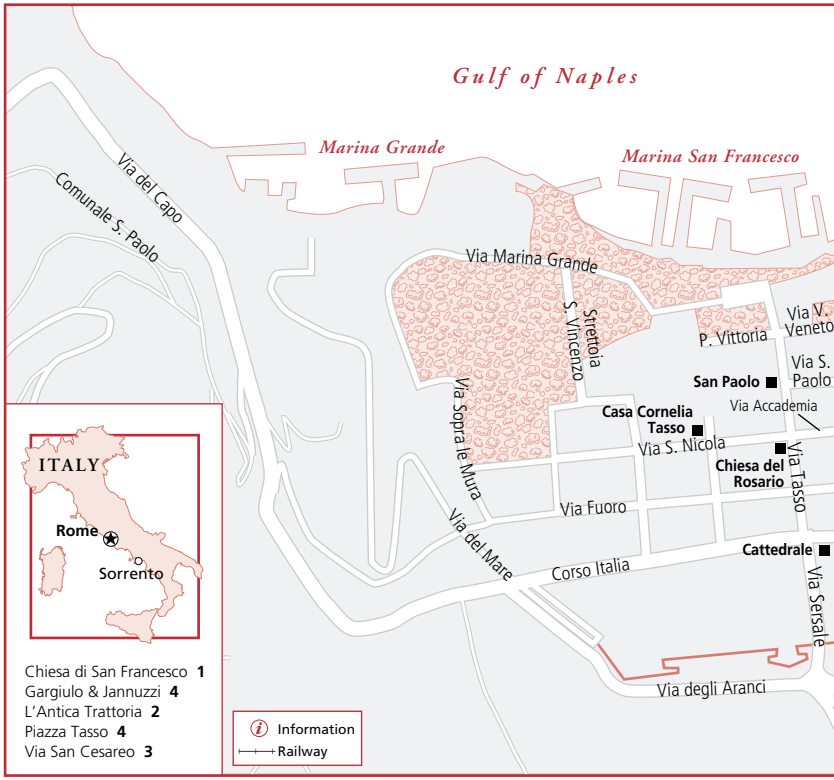
Though most ships stop here more for the easy access Sorrento provides to the ancient city of Pompeii, the scenic Amalfi Coast, and the nearby romantic isle

Rome


Ple Clodio
Circonv. Clodia
Cir.ne Trionfale
PRATI
Via Ottaviano
Viale delle Milizie
Lepanto
Viale-Giulio Cesare
Via Andrea Doria
Ple. d. Eroi
Via Candia
Ottaviano–San Pietro
Via Germanico
Via de Gracchi
Via Cola di Rienzo
Via Virgilio
Via Tacito
Via Cicerone
Via Feder. Casi
Pz. Cola di Rienzo
Pza. d. Libertà
Pte. Reg Margherita
Lung. in Augusta
Via di Ripetta
Via del Corso
Via Flaminia
Ponte G. Matteotti
Lungotev. Michelangelo
Via Dom. A. Azuni
Flaminio
Ple. Flaminio
Viale Giorgio Washington
Viale del Muro Torto
Via L. di Savoia
Via Ferd. di Savoia
Pincio
Pza. del Popolo
Via Leone IV
Cipro–Musei Vaticani
Viale Vaticano
Piazza d. Risorgimento
Via Crescenzio
Vatican Museums
VATICAN CITY
V. di Pta. Angelica
Piazza San Pietro
St. Peter's
Via d. Corridori Borgo
Via della Conciliazione
Borgo Santo Spirito
Piazza Adriana
Castel Sant'Angelo
Lung. Castello
Ponte S. Angelo
Lung. Vaticano
Lung. Vitt. Eman.
Ponte Umberto
Lung. Prati
Lung. Marzio
Via della Scofia
Piazza Cavour
V.V. Colonna
Ponte Cavour
Mausoleum of Augustus
Via Tomacelli
Via di Campo Marzio
Pza. Campo Marzio
Pza. Montecitorio
Pza. S. Agostino
Via dei Coronari
Via Aurelia
Via Pza. Cavalleggeri
Pza. d. Rovere
P. Pr. Am. Sav. Aosta
Lung. d. Sangallo
Lung. Gianicolense
GIANICOLO
Gianicolo
Passeggiata del
Viale d. Mura Gianicolesi
Pza. d. Chiesa Nuova
Via del Governo Vecchio
Piazza Navona
Pza. d. Eustachio
Pza. d. Rotonda
Corso Rinascimento
Corso Vittorio Eman. II
Pza. d. Minerva
Pza. Campo d. Fiori
Lgo. d. Torre Argentina
Largo Arenula
Ponte G. Mazzini
Tiber (Tevere) River
Lungotev. dei Tebaldi
Via Giulia
Palazzo Farnese
Palazzo Spada
Pza. Mattei
JEWISH GHETTO
Via Arenula
Ponte Sisto
Lung. dei Cenci
P. Garibaldi
Tiber Island
P. Fabricio
P. Cestio
Lung. R. Sanzio
Via d. Lungaretta
Pza. S. Sonnino
Pza. Piscinula
P. Palatino
Lung. d. Farnesina
Via della Lungara
Ple. G. Garibaldi
Via Garibaldi
P. di Gianicolo
VILLA DORIA PAMPHILJ
TRASTEVERE
Pza. di S. Cosimato
V. dei Genovesi
V. S. Francesco a Ripa
Viale di Trastevere
V.E. Morosini
Viale Glorioso
Via Ascianghi
Pza. di Pta. Portese
Via di S. Michele
Porto di Ripa Grande
Lung. Aventino
Via Portuense
Viale di Trastevere
Lung. Testaccio
P. Publicio
Via G. Branca
Via Marmorata
TESTACCIO
ITALY
Civitavecchia
ROME
Arch of Constantine 9
Circus Maximus 8
The Colosseum 10
Pantheon 3
Roman Forum 7
Sistine Chapel 1
St. Peter's Basilica 2
The Spanish Steps 4
Trajan's Column 6
Trevi Fountain 5
Vatican Museum 1


National Gallery of Modern Art
Viale del Giardino Zoologico
GIARDINO ZOOLOGICO
Viale dell'Uccelliera
Viale Giulia
Viale dell'Arancieria
Viale della Cannonica
Viale dei Cavalli Marini
Piazza di Siena
VILLA BORGHESE
Viale d. Magnolie
Viale del Muro Torto
Via Pinciana
Via Po
Via Salaria
Via Isonzo
Via Tevere
Via Savoia
Viale Regina Margherita
Corso d'Italia
Via Campania
Via Sardegna
Via Sicilia
Via Boncompagni
Via Piave
Ple. di Porta Pia
Policlinico
Via di Porta Pinciana
Via Vittorio Veneto
Via Ludovisi
Spagna
Spanish Steps
Pza. di Spagna
Via Condotti
Lgo. di S. Susanna
National Roman Museum
Viale Castro Pretorio
Castro Pretorio
Barberini
Via Barberini
Via Fr. Crispi
Via Sistina
Via XX Settembre
Via Torino
Piazza Indipendenza
Pza. Barberini
Via d.
National Gallery of Ancient Art
Lg. de Tritone
Via Tritone
Piazza Repubblica
Pza. Cinque-cento
Repubblica
Stazione Termini
Viale Pretoriano
Pza. Colonna
Via del Quirinale
Quattro Fontane
V. d. Viminale
Via Marsala
Termini
Pza. d. Quirinale
Via Nazionale
Via Milano
Teatro dell'Opera
Pza. dell'Esquilino
Via Giovanni Giolitti
Via Principe Amedeo
Via del Corso
Via XXIV Maggio
Via IV Nov.
V. Cavour
V. Carlo Alberto
Via d. Plebiscito
Pza. Venezia
Vittorio Emanuele Monument
Via Cavour
Cavour
Vittorio Emanuele
Via Leopardi
Via Merulana
Piazza Vittorio Eman. II
Via dei Fori Imperiali
San Pietro in Vincoli
Via di Marforio
CAPITOLINE HILL
Roman Forum
Colosseo
Colosseum
Via Labicana
Via Manzoni
Vle. Merulana
Manzoni
Via D. Teatro
Pza. d. Colosseo
Via di S. Giovanni in Laterano
Vle. Manzoni
Piazza Bocca d. Verità
PALATINE HILL
Via del Circo Massimo
Via di S. Gregorio
Via Claudia
Pza. di S. Giovanni in Laterano
S. Giovanni
AVENTINE HILL
Circo Massimo
Pza. di Pta. Capena
Via della Navicella
Via D. Terme di Caracalla
Via Druso
Pza. di Pla. Metronia
Via Sannio
Via Magna Greca
Re di Roma
Piazza Albania
Viale Aventino
Via di S. Anselmo
Via Antonina
Baths of Caracalla
Via Gallia
Pza. Tuscole
Piramide
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Information
Metro
Railway

Sorrento



of Capri, Sorrento itself makes for a pleasant stroll, especially among the pretty lemon groves, and is a good place to do some shopping or sit in an outdoor cafe to people-watch.

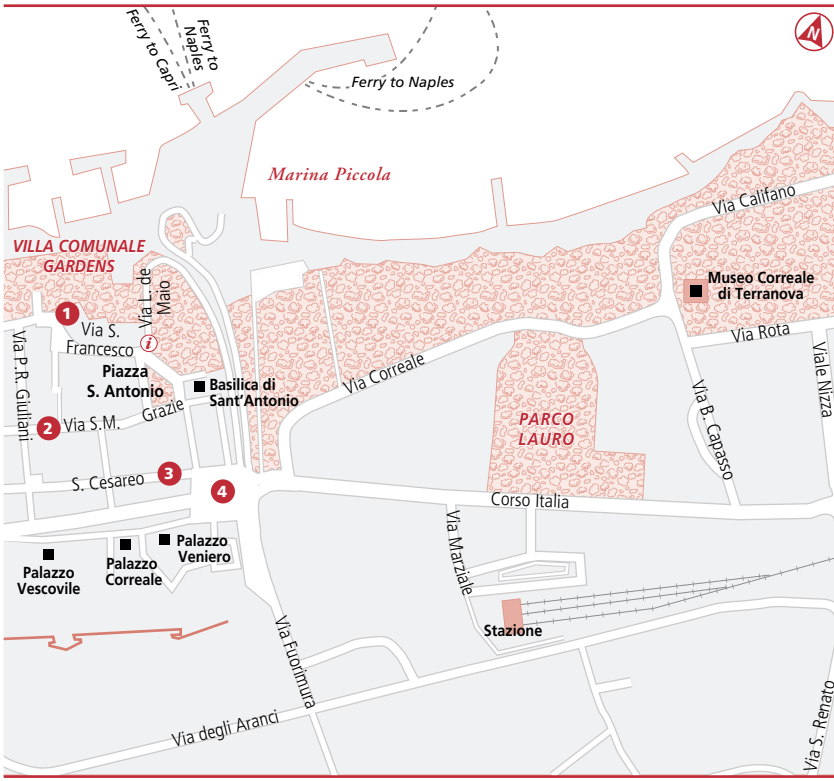
FROMMER'S FAVORITE SORRENTO EXPERIENCES

- **Taking the shore excursion to Pompeii or to Capri.** That's really why your ship has stopped here.
- **Strolling around town and having a coffee in an outdoor cafe.** The shops are worth a look (especially those featuring inlaid wood and other local crafts) and this is a great place to people-watch.

COMING ASHORE & GETTING AROUND Ships tender passengers to the pier, where you'll usually find **taxis.** The center of town is about a 15-minute uphill walk. **Minibuses** operated by the city also make the uphill climb. (Ships may also dock in Naples, offering comparable shore excursions.)

THE BEST SHORE EXCURSIONS

The Ruins of Pompeii (4½ hr.; $62–$88): Tour this once prosperous ancient city of 20,000, which was buried when Vesuvius erupted in A.D. 79. Today, nearly two-thirds of the city has been excavated and the ruins are amazing. On your guided walk through the rocky ruins you'll visit the baths and theaters, the wrestling ground, and the restored villas. During the drive you can view Vesuvius, the still-active volcano.



Capri (5 hr.; $55–$79): Board a hydrofoil for a cruise to Capri. Transfer by bus to Anacapri for magnificent views and a tour of Villa San Michele, with its collection of antiquities. Return to town for a walking tour of Capri to visit the Gardens of Augustus Park and explore the town's narrow streets and central square. The tour includes time to shop or visit a cafe.

Amalfi Coast (5–7 hr.; $66–$85): Drive about 2 hours along the scenic coast to Amalfi town, a romantic setting that was a major shipping port during the Middle Ages. Take a guided tour of the town's center, including the Cathedral of St. Andrea, built in a combination of Moorish and early Gothic design. Time is allowed for souvenir shopping. From the bus, you'll see Positano with its white houses, terraced gardens, and fishing fleets, and other scenic coastal sights. (A longer tour may be offered with lunch for about $120; $260 if lunch is at the very fancy cliff-hanging San Pietro in Positano.)

THE TOP ATTRACTIONS

Chiesa di San Francesco (The Cloister of St. Francis) While few people come here to look at churches, this one is worth a peek. It dates from the 14th century, and offers pretty archways and a lovely garden. The convent is also an art school that regularly offers exhibits.

Via San Francesco. ✆ **081/878-1269.** Free admission. Daily 9am–6pm.

LOCAL FLAVORS

Pasta with seafood and fish cooked in salt crust are popular selections here. One of the best places to sample the local cuisine is the 200-year-old **L'Antica Trattoria,** Via P.R. Giuliani 33 (✆ **081/807-1082**). Reservations are recommended. The restaurant's specialty is its antipasti. Open for lunch and dinner. Reservations are recommended. Main courses run 12€ to 24€ ($14–$28).

BEST BUYS

The best areas for strolling and window-shopping are **Piazza Tasso** and **Via San Cesareo.** Locally made wooden inlaid items make a great souvenir, although prices are steep. The region's best-known maker of inlaid furniture is **Gargiulo & Jannuzzi,** Piazza Tasso (✆ **081/878-1041**), which opened in 1863. Employees demonstrate the technique to tourists in the shop's basement. Embroidery and lace are two of the best bargains in Sorrento, and **Luigia Gargiulo,** Corso Italia 48 (✆ **081/878-1081**), is recommended for embroidered sheets and tablecloths; the shop also offers children's clothing. Other popular souvenir items include coral jewelry and lemon liquor (called limoncello).

VENICE

Everywhere you look in Venice there's something worth seeing, whether it's the Gothic and Renaissance structures this city seems to have grown like trees, or the construction efforts aimed at stopping said buildings from sinking.

Our favorite activity here is simply exploring the maze of canals and side streets, crossing the medieval bridges, people-watching, and getting lost (and finding our way back home again). That activity, in summer, can help you avoid some of the hordes of other visitors who crowd together at St. Mark's Square.

Getting out on the **Grand Canal,** a water version of a main city boulevard, is a must-do, whether you go the touristy route on a gondola (negotiate upfront with the driver and expect to pay through your teeth) or on equally overpriced water taxis, or if you travel like most Venetians do on a vaporetto (water bus). The **S**-shaped canal curves for 3.2km (2 miles) past historic buildings, ornate bridges, and palaces. And as you check out the sights, you'll share the main waterway with ambulances, delivery barges, and other vessels going about the tasks of ordinary life here.

Everywhere you look there will be something artistic or otherwise fascinating to see. Like Florence, Venice has a treasure trove of paintings, statues, and frescoes in its churches (including the famous St. Mark's) and in its palaces. And the Peggy Guggenheim museum houses one of the best collections of 20th-century art in the Western world.

Check out the shops and cafes in and around **St. Mark's Square.** Enjoy the fact there are no cars, and ignore the fact there are too many other tourists (especially if you visit in July or Aug). Also ignore the fact that the prices for food and souvenirs have gotten ridiculously high. Have a meal, the favorite Italian pastime; grab a coffee or gelato in a cafe; or sip an overpriced Bloody Mary at Harry's Bar.

FROMMER'S FAVORITE VENICE EXPERIENCES

- **Going exploring.** The maze of historic streets and canals offers fascinating sights at nearly every turn.
- **Going shopping.** The selection of locally produced glass and other crafts is amazing, and the Italian designer shops are tempting, even if the prices can be steep. And Prada is less expensive here than in New York.

- ***Mangia!*** Venetian cuisine, especially the seafood, is excellent, and worth the splurge.

COMING ASHORE & GETTING AROUND Ships generally dock about 15 to 20 minutes by boat from St. Mark's Square. Travel here is on the water, by **water taxi** (which will be pricey) or on the **water buses** called *vaporetti* (which are cheap).

THE BEST SHORE EXCURSIONS

Venice City Sightseeing (3–4½ hr.; $48–$99): Take a motor launch to St. Mark's Square for a guided walking tour of St. Mark's Cathedral, one of the world's most famous churches. Tour the Doge's Palace, the former residence of the Duke of Venice. The itinerary also includes the Golden Staircase, where you can enjoy the views of St. Mark's Basin. You'll also cross the famous Bridge of Sighs and stop at the small workshops of glass manufacturers.

The Grand Canal & the Inside Canal (2½ hr.; $83–$118): Travel by motorboat with a guide and 10 to 12 other people and see the way the city works—the police, fire brigade, even wedding and funeral processions travel by boat. From the water you'll get a wonderful view of St. Mark's Square and other sights, including palaces and the Guggenheim Museum. You'll also go under the famous Rialto Bridge.

The Historic Jewish Ghetto (3½ hr.; $59–$72): In the 16th century, the Jews of Venice were restricted to the Ghetto unless they were doctors. They had to wear distinctive clothing and could not own land. The Ghetto has been preserved and offers a fascinating glimpse of what life was like for the people who lived there, and of the modern Jewish culture in Venice (several synagogues in the Ghetto still have active congregations). You take a motor launch to the entrance and tour on foot.

Evening Gondola Ride with Serenade (2 hr.; $87–$89): It may sound hokey, but there is something magical about exploring the canals of this romantic city on these black pointy vessels, with a gondolier singing in Italian. The trip takes you on to narrow canals, past historic homes, and under old stone bridges.

THE TOP ATTRACTIONS

Palazzo Ducale (Doge's Palace) & the Bridge of Sighs This Venetian Gothic palazzo is Italy's grandest civic structure. And it literally gleams. While it dates back to 1309, most was destroyed by a fire and rebuilt in the 16th century. Many of the greatest Venetian painters of that century helped with the restoration. After climbing the Sansovino stairway of gold, proceed to the Anti-Collegio salon to view Veronese's *Rape of Europe* and Tintoretto's *Three Graces* and *Bacchus and Ariadne.* Downstairs you can visit the apartments of the Doges and the grand Maggior Consiglio, with its allegorical *Triumph of Venice* by Veronese on the ceiling. Tintoretto's *Paradise* over the Grand Council chamber is said to be the largest oil painting in the world.

Follow the arrows to the Bridge of Sighs, which links the Doge's Palace with the Palazzo delle Prigioni, where you'll find cell blocks—the sighs refer to the laments of those tortured here.

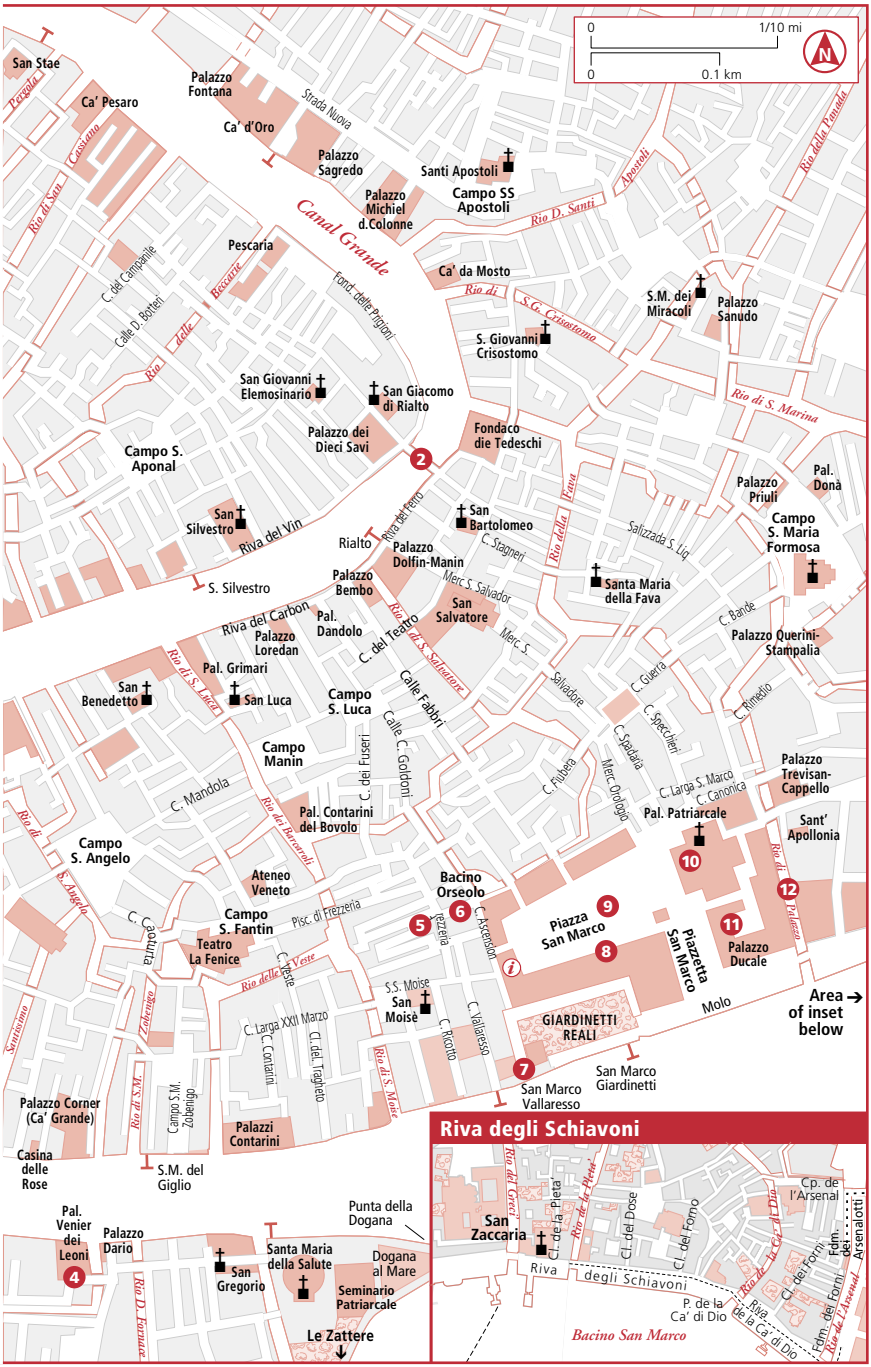
Piazzetta San Marco. ✆ **041/522-4951.** Admission 9.40€ ($11) adults, 5.15€ ($5.90) students with ID, 3.10€ ($3.55) children 6–13, free for children under 5. Apr–Oct daily 9am–7pm.

Venice



Accademia **3**
Astolfo Gloria **5**
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N
San Stae
Ca' Pesaro
Palazzo Fontana
Ca' d'Oro
Strada Nuova
Palazzo Sagredo
Santi Apostoli
Campo SS Apostoli
Palazzo Michiel d.Colonne
Canal Grande
Pescaria
Ca' da Mosto
S.M. dei Miracoli
Palazzo Sanudo
S. Giovanni Crisostomo
San Giovanni Elemosinario
San Giacomo di Rialto
Palazzo dei Dieci Savi
Fondaco die Tedeschi
Campo S. Aponal
San Silvestro
Riva del Vin
Rialto
San Bartolomeo
Palazzo Priuli
Pal. Donà
Campo S. Maria Formosa
Palazzo Dolfin-Manin
Palazzo Bembo
S. Silvestro
Santa Maria della Fava
Riva del Carbon
Pal. Dandolo
San Salvatore
Palazzo Querini-Stampalia
Palazzo Loredan
Pal. Grimari
San Benedetto
San Luca
Campo S. Luca
Calle Fabbri
Campo Manin
Palazzo Trevisan-Cappello
Pal. Contarini del Bovolo
Pal. Patriarcale
Sant' Apollonia
Campo S. Angelo
Ateneo Veneto
Bacino Orseolo
Campo S. Fantin
Teatro La Fenice
Piazza San Marco
Piazzetta San Marco
Palazzo Ducale
Area of inset below
S.S. Moisè
San Moisè
GIARDINETTI REALI
San Marco Vallaresso
San Marco Giardinetti
Palazzo Corner (Ca' Grande)
Palazzi Contarini
Casina delle Rose
S.M. del Giglio
Pal. Venier dei Leoni
Palazzo Dario
Punta della Dogana
San Gregorio
Santa Maria della Salute
Dogana al Mare
Seminario Patriarcale
Le Zattere
Riva degli Schiavoni
San Zaccaria
Riva
degli Schiavoni
Bacino San Marco
P. de la Ca' di Dio
Riva de la Ca' di Dio
Cp. de l'Arsenal
Arsenalotti
Molo

St. Mark's Basilica (Basilica di San Marco) The "Church of Gold" is one of the greatest and most elaborate churches in the world, built in a conglomeration of styles, though Byzantine predominates (it looks like it would be just as at home in Istanbul). The basilica is capped by a dome that can be seen from your ship as you cruise down the Grand Canal. On the facade are replicas of the four famous St. Mark's horses (see more below). One mosaic depicts the entry of the evangelist's body into Venice, hidden in a pork barrel (the body was smuggled out of Alexandria in 828).

In the atrium are six cupolas with mosaics depicting scenes from the Old Testament, including the story of the Tower of Babel. The basilica's interior, once used as the private chapel of the doges, is stunning, with marbles, alabaster, pillars, and an ocean of mosaics.

The **treasury** contains skulls and bones of ecclesiastical authorities as well as goblets, chalices, and Gothic candelabra. In the presbytery rests the alleged sarcophagus of St. Mark.

The **Marciano Museum** upstairs contains the Triumphal Quadriga, the four famous horses looted from Constantinople by Venetian crusaders in 1204. The horses used to be outside, but were moved indoors due to pollution damage and subsequently restored. They're the only quartet of yoked horses to have survived from the classical era. It is believed they were cast in the 4th century. Napoleon once carted these horses off to Paris, but they were returned to Venice in 1815. From the museum, which also contains mosaics and tapestries, you can walk out onto the loggia for a view of Piazza San Marco.

Piazza San Marco. ✆ **041/522-5697.** Basilica free; treasury 2€ ($2.30); presbytery 1.50€ ($1.75); Marciano Museum 1.50€ ($1.75). Basilica Apr–Sept 10am–5pm. **Note:** Men and women are barred from wearing shorts or exposing bare arms and shoulders, and women may not wear skirts above the knee in the basilica. Silence is required, and you may not take photos.

St. Mark's Square (Piazza San Marco) This square is the cultural hub of the city. You can easily spend hours here, watching people and feeding the pigeons, sitting at a cafe, visiting the Basilica and Doge's Palace (see above), and shopping. But the square is also a tourist hub that can be very crowded during the day, especially in the high summer tourist season. To see the square with fewer crowds, go very early in the morning (watch the sun come up) or in the evening. At night, there are music performances by chamber orchestras and other groups.

Accademia The glory of old Venice lives on in this museum, with its remarkable collection of paintings from the 14th to the 18th century.

Campo della Caritá, Dorsoduro. ✆ **041/522-2247.** Admission 6€ ($6.90) adults, free for children under 18 and seniors 60 and over. Tues–Sat 9am–7pm; Sun–Mon 9am–4pm.

Collezione Peggy Guggenheim Ms. Guggenheim's former home, an impressive palazzo on the Grand Canal, now houses a comprehensive and brilliant modern art collection. In the tradition of her family, Guggenheim, who

Climbing the Bell Tower

For about 6€ ($6.90) adults, 3€ ($3.45) students, you can climb to the top of the bell tower of St. Mark's, and you don't even have to brave a dark, steep, winding staircase to do it—there's an elevator. From the top you can get a bird's-eye view of the city, and a nice view as well of the basilica's cupolas. Daily, 9:30am to 6:30pm.

Portofino

For quaint fishing villages, you can't beat Portofino, known as the "Pearl of the Riviera," even if the harbor is almost overrun with luxury yachts in the summer. The village offers frescoed houses and lush vegetation and is absolutely picture-postcard perfect.

Ships tender passengers right into town (some offer Portofino as a shore excursion from Genoa). The town is tiny, and you can easily explore the narrow streets on foot. There are wonderful waterfront cafes, art galleries, and jewelry shops (be aware that prices can be hefty), but we highly recommend a hike up the hill above the harbor (you can also take a cab) for lunch on the terrace at the **Hotel Splendido,** Viale Baratta 13 (✆ **800/223-6800** in the U.S., or 0185/269-551; reservations recommended). It may be the most expensive lunch you've ever eaten (be prepared to spend about 111€/$127 a person), but the splendid food, service, and views are worth every penny (or make that every C-note). Illustrious guests at the hotel have included the duke and duchess of Windsor, Ernest Hemingway, Greta Garbo, Ingrid Bergman, Clark Gable, and John Wayne.

died in 1979, was a lifelong patron of contemporary painters and sculptors. Displayed are works by Pollack, Ernst, Picasso, Braque, Magritte, Duchamp, Chagall, Mondrian, Brancusi, Dalí, Giacometti, and others. Some ships offer the opportunity to tour the museum on a private basis, on special shore excursions.

Ca' Venier dei Leoni, Dorsoduro 701, Calle San Cristoforo. ✆ **041/240-5411.** Admission 8€ ($9.20) adults, 5€ ($5.75) students, children 12 and under free. Wed–Sun 10am–6pm.

LOCAL FLAVORS

Papa Hemingway liked **Harry's Bar** (Calle Vallaresso, San Marco; ✆ **041/528-5777**), but the fame has made the prices here downright shocking (main courses run 41€–55€/$47–$63), especially given the rather simple food. Still, those wishing to pay tribute to Hemingway should at least order a Bloody Mary at the bar.

A more reasonable choice is **Trattoria la Colomba,** Piscina Frezzeria, San Marco 1665 (✆ **041/522-1175;** reservations recommended). The history of this restaurant is linked to some of Venice's leading painters, who traded art for meals. Modern paintings adorn the walls today (they change seasonally and are for sale). You can also dine outside. The cuisine is Venetian and includes wonderful seafood and pasta dishes and locally grown vegetables; main courses run from 18€ to 39€ ($21–$45). For a more casual restaurant with excellent seafood, try **Corte Sconta,** Calle del Pestrin, Castello 3886 (✆ **041/522-7024;** reservations required). Main courses are in the 13€ to 22€ ($15–$25) range.

One of the most famous cafes for a light lunch, coffee, or sweet snack is **Caffé Florian** in St. Mark's Square, built in 1720 and romantically decorated with plush red banquettes and elaborate murals. Casanova is on the list of famous customers.

BEST BUYS

Venice is a shopper's delight, as long as you don't mind the steep prices, and it's fun exploring the winding streets of shops around St. Mark's Square and the Rialto Bridge. Generally, the farther away from the square you go, the more reasonable the prices become.

You'll find plenty of locally produced items including glassware, lace, linens, masks, leather goods (including shoes), and knitwear. Shops in tourist areas stay open long hours (many close for lunch, however), and some are even open on Sundays. One of Fran's favorite shops is the tiny **Astolfo Gloria,** Frezzeria, San Marco (✆ **041/520-6827**), which features reasonably priced jewelry made of Venetian glass beads.

5 Malta

The former home of the Knights of St. John, the island nation of Malta, located on the southernmost tip of Europe (about 97km/60 miles from Sicily and 290km/180 miles from North Africa) has at one time or another been dominated by all its neighbors, including the British and the French.

Visitors to its bustling capital, **Valletta,** will find cathedrals, palazzos, and fortifications, mostly from the period of the knights, which started in the 16th century and ended when they were driven off the island by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1798. It is said that the city was built "by gentlemen, for gentlemen."

Malta became part of the British Empire in 1800, was granted independence in 1964, and became a republic in 1974. A must-see in Valletta for those interested in the island's history is *The Malta Experience* audiovisual presentation (see "Frommer's Favorite Malta Experiences," below).

Valletta is quite compact and easy to explore on foot. In addition to historic sights, the city offers a wealth of museums, restaurants, and shopping opportunities. Other parts of the island feature quaint towns, ancient sites (including the oldest known freestanding prehistoric temple structures in the world), and historic churches, all easily accessible.

The sea offers excellent opportunities for divers. For sun worshippers, there are a number of sandy beaches, the best of which, including Mellieha Bay, Golden Sands, and Armier, can be found in the north of the island.

Valletta's Grand Harbour is very impressive; you'll want to be on deck as the massive fortifications come into view.

CURRENCY The official unit of currency is the Maltese lira (L). The rate of exchange at press time was $1 = 0.37 lira.

LANGUAGE Maltese and English (Malta is a former British colony and English is widely spoken).

FROMMER'S FAVORITE MALTA EXPERIENCES

- **Seeing *The Malta Experience.*** This audiovisual presentation offers a look at the island's fascinating history. (Mediterranean Conference center, Old Hospital Street. Admission is about 2.50L/$6.70. The 40-min. presentation is offered on the hour, Mon–Fri 11am–4pm; Sat–Sun 11am and noon.)
- **Exploring Mdina.** The island's medieval capital, about a 30-minute drive from Valletta, is a quaint, pedestrians-only walled city perched atop a plateau.

- **Visiting a museum.** You have numerous choices here, including museums of fine arts, archaeology, war, folklore, maritime (in Fort St. Angelo), science, and even toys.
- **Strolling Republic Street.** This is the place to be seen and to meet Malta's friendly populace. You can also view historically interesting buildings.

COMING ASHORE & GETTING AROUND Ships dock close to the center of town. It's about a 15-minute walk or a 5-minute ride. **Taxis** are available at the pier. Malta's public transportation system is cheap and efficient. **Buses** cost less than .30L (75¢) with the longest bus journey taking only 50 minutes.

THE BEST SHORE EXCURSIONS

Malta's Capital (4–4½ hr.; $35–$50): This bus and walking tour of Valletta (stopping at City Gate) visits St. John's Co-Cathedral, Palace of the Grand Masters, after which you drive by bus to the medieval fortified city of Mdina, where you'll find quaint winding streets and beautiful homes as well as a cathedral dedicated to St. Peter and St. Paul.

Full-Day Tour of Malta (7–7½ hr.; $69–$110): A look at the island's history from the Bronze Age to the reign of the Order of the Knights of St. John. Visit Mdina; stop at the nearby town of Rabat, famous for its catacombs and Roman ruins; visit a parish church completed in 1860 and boasting the fourth largest unsupported dome in the world; visit the prehistoric Tarxien Temples; and visit Valletta, with a stop at the Palace of the Grand Masters with its Tapestry Room and Throne Room. Includes lunch and a stop at a crafts center (to watch glassblowers and traditional lacemaking, weaving, and silver filigree art).

Tour of the Temples (4 hr.; $36–$42): This tour includes some of the world's most impressive prehistoric temples, driving by bus to the Cottonera region; visiting the Malta Maritime Museum, which houses relics of Malta's history; visiting the temples of Hagar Qim with its decorated pillar and two altars, all constructed in the late megalithic period on a slope facing the tiny island of Filfla; then visiting Tarxien Temples, where the archaeological remains date back to 2,500 B.C.

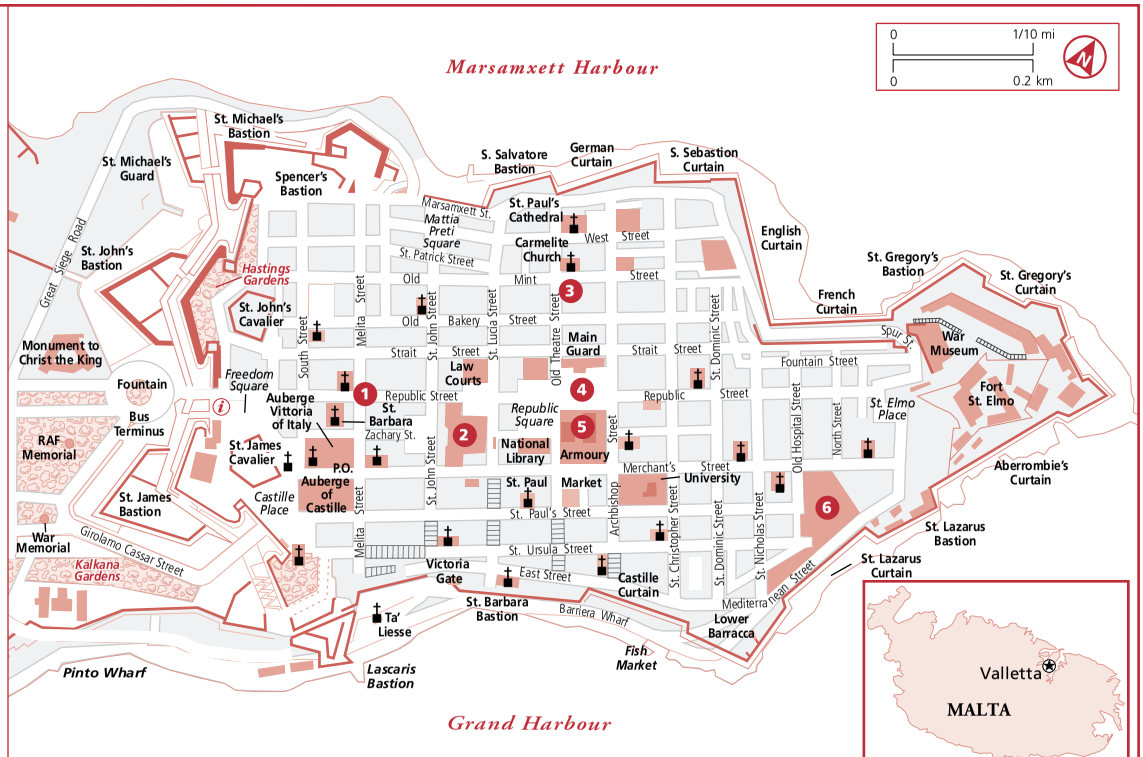
Malta Trekking (4 hr.; $50): Get off the beaten path on this 10km (6¼-mile) trek to dramatic western parts of the island, undeveloped and only accessible by foot. Views include striking sea cliffs over the ocean. Some of the trekking is on uneven terrain and over boulders (participants should be physically fit). All participants get a pack with a sandwich, fruit, and mineral water.

Jeep Safari (4 hr.; $59–$64): Another way to get off the beaten path, but this time in 4WD vehicles. Visit isolated spots including the rural village of Mgarr, as well as Mellieha, once an isolated 15th-century hamlet and now a resort town. Pass ancient stone walls and fertile farm land, view the impressive Dingli Cliffs, and stop at Wied iz-Zurrieq, home of Malta's Blue Grotto. ***Note:*** The ride can be bumpy.

Diving in Malta

There are great diving opportunities in Malta and numerous watersports and diving centers that rent out equipment. For more information, contact the Malta National Tourism Organization in Valletta, ✆ **356/22-44-4.**

- The Malta Experience **6**
- Manoel Theater **3**
- Palace of the Grand Master **5**
- Palace Square **4**
- Republic Street **1**
- St. John's Co-Cathedral **2**



THE TOP ATTRACTIONS

Manoel Theatre This is one of the oldest theaters in Europe still in operation, built by the Portuguese Grand Master Antonio Manoel de Vilhena in 1731.

Old Theatre Street. ✆ **356/22-26-18.** Admission about 1.65L ($4.40). Tours Mon–Fri at 10:30am and 11:30am; Sat 11:30am; no tours Sun.

Palace of the Grand Master This grand 500-year-old residence was completed in 1574 and today is the seat of the president and Parliament of the Republic of Malta. Inside are portraits of European monarchs and the Grand Masters of the Order of St. John, a furniture collection, Gobelin tapestries, frescoes, friezes, and other works of art.

Republic Street. ✆ **356/22-12-21.** Admission about 1L ($2.70), free for seniors and students under age 19. 1-week ticket (valid for 10 visits) 1L ($2.25). June 16–Sept 30 Mon–Fri 8am–2:45pm; at other times, Mon–Wed 8:30am–3:45pm, Thurs–Fri 8:30am–4pm.

St. John's Co-Cathedral The outside of this church, built between 1573 and 1577, is rather austere, but the interior is gorgeous and holds art treasures that include the Caravaggio masterpiece *The Beheading of St. John.* The museum houses a collection of Flemish tapestries, silver objects, and church vestments.

St. John's Square. ✆ **356/22-05-36.** Admission 1L ($2.70). Mon–Fri 9:30am–12:30pm and 1:30–4:30pm; Sat 9:30am–12:30pm.

LOCAL FLAVORS

The food here is close to Italian, with a liberal use of garlic and olive oil. Fish is a favorite, as is rabbit.

BEST BUYS

Local, traditional crafts include hand-blown glass and lace, ceramics, silver and gold jewelry, metalwork, pottery, and tiles. Shops can be found on Republic Street and the small streets near Palace Square.

6 Portugal

Lisbon is Europe's smallest capital, but this city of seven hills is also a cosmopolitan place offering a pleasing combination of history, cultural arts, modern amenities, and visual treats. Some areas might remind visitors of Paris, with street painters and the like, yet other areas resemble hilly San Francisco.

The city is alternately believed to have been founded by Ulysses and the Phoenicians, and was inhabited by Romans and later the Moors. In 1755, a great earthquake destroyed much of the city, killing some 40,000 people. The rebuilding was carefully planned based on a neoclassical grid. Areas untouched by the earthquake include Belém, on the banks of the Tagus River, and Alfama.

Lisbon offers historical sights, museums, and, thanks to the city's hosting of Expo '98, new attractions such as the Lisbon Oceanarium, billed as Europe's largest aquarium.

CURRENCY As of March 2002, Portugal switched entirely to the euro (€) for its currency. One euro is made up of 100 euro cents. The exchange rate at press time was $1 = .87€.

LANGUAGE Portuguese. Young people may also speak Spanish, English, or German.

FROMMER'S FAVORITE PORTUGAL EXPERIENCES

- **Exploring the Alfama.** Houses in the alleys are so close together you can't stretch your arms in some places to their full length. (Claustrophobics, look out!) Visit the 12th-century Sé (cathedral), check out the goods at the markets, and climb up to the Castelo Saño Jorge (St. George's Castle) to enjoy the views.
- **Shopping for handicrafts.** Although prices aren't as good as they used to be, look for colorful ceramics, embroidery, silver, porcelain, crystal, tiles, handwoven rugs, leather goods, and hand-knit sweaters.
- **Feeling like an explorer.** Belém, where the River Tagus meets the sea, is where Portuguese explorers like Magellan launched their missions. Check out Belém Tower and Jerónimos Monastery. Also explore the National Coach Museum.
- **Listening to fado.** Singers accompanied by 12-stringed Portuguese guitars can be heard nightly performing these melancholy songs in the little houses of the Bairro Alto.
- **Spending quiet time in Sintra.** Byron called this delightful village "glorious Eden." The area around the village is known colloquially as Serra de Sintra. A drive around the loop is only about 58km (36 miles), but plan to spend a day stopping off at such scenic delights as the remote Franciscan monastery (ca. 1560) known as Convento dos Capuchos, and the old lighthouse at Cabo da Roca, the most westerly point on the European mainland.

COMING ASHORE & GETTING AROUND Cruise ships dock at the Port of Lisbon, about 15 minutes by car from the city center (3km/2 miles to the Alcantara district; 5km/3 miles to Belém Tower).

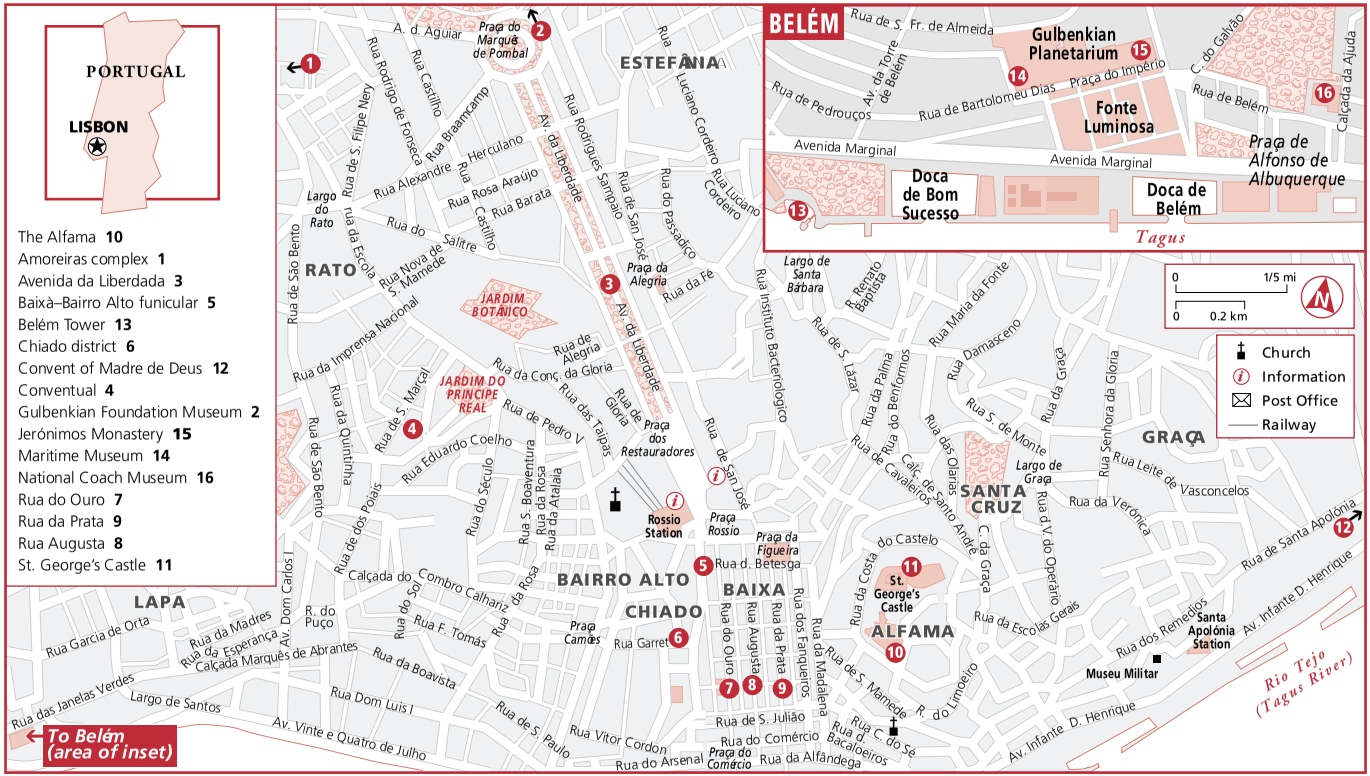
Lisbon itself is a walking city and is easy to get around, although the hills may prove challenging to some. **Taxis** are among the cheapest in Europe and are generally available outside the terminal building. They are usually diesel Mercedes. The ride to the central sightseeing and shopping districts is likely to be between 12€ and 19€ ($14–$22). Traffic can be congested, so allow extra time. The city also has a good **bus and tram service** as well as a Metro **subway** to get around. There's a **funicular** (elevator) connecting the Baixa area (where you'll find shopping) with the Bairro Alto (where you'll find nightlife).

THE BEST SHORE EXCURSIONS

Lisbon City Tour (3½ hr.; $44–$61): This bus tour hits a number of city highlights, including Avenida da Liberdade with its mosaic-lined sidewalks and the magnificent views at Black Horse Square of the River Tagus. Tour the impressive Jerónimos Monastery. Also visit the National Coach Museum, or the Convent of Madre de Deus, founded in 1509 and containing samples of religious architecture.

Sintra & Estoril (4 hr.; $44–$64): This tour along the famous and scenic Estoril coast includes such memorable highlights as Sintra, a serene, historic resort nestled in the forested hills of Serra de Sintra. The tour continues inland to Queluz, to visit the magnificent 18th-century palace built in the style of Versailles.

Fatima & Batalha (8–9 hr.; $72–$129): Located 161km (100 miles) from Lisbon is the place known to Roman Catholics as the "Lourdes of Portugal." Here, according to legend, three shepherds in 1917 claimed they saw the Virgin


PORTUGAL
LISBON
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St. George's Castle 11
BELÉM
Gulbenkian Planetarium
Fonte Luminosa
Praça de Afonso de Albuquerque
Doca de Bom Sucesso
Doca de Belém
Tagus
RATO
ESTEFÂNIA
JARDIM BOTÂNICO
JARDIM DO PRÍNCIPE REAL
BAIRRO ALTO
BAIXA
CHIADO
ALFAMA
SANTA CRUZ
GRAÇA
LAPA
Rossio Station
Praça dos Restauradores
Praça Rossio
Praça da Figueira
Praça da Alegria
Praça Camões
St. George's Castle
Santa Apolónia Station
Museu Militar
Rio Tejo (Tagus River)
To Belém (area of inset)
0 1/5 mi
0 0.2 km
Church
Information
Post Office
Railway
Lisbon

Mary in an oak tree. The town has since become a center of the Christian faith and of world pilgrimage. You will have time here to explore the imposing modern basilica, and on some tours you'll also visit the homes, just outside Fatima, where the three shepherds lived (their remains are kept inside the basilica). Lunch will be served at a local restaurant or hotel. Afterwards, continue on to Batalha for a visit to the impressive Gothic church of Santa Maria da Victoria.

THE TOP ATTRACTIONS

Belém Tower (Torre de Belém) Scenically located on the banks of the Tagus River, the 16th-century tower is a monument to Portugal's age of discovery and its famous explorers.

Praca do Imperio, Belém district. ✆ **21-362-0034.** Admission 3€ ($3.45) adults, 1.20€ ($1.40) students and seniors, children under 15 free. May–Sept Tues–Sun 10am–6:30pm; Oct–Apr 10am–5pm; last entry 30 minutes before closing.

Gulbenkian Foundation Museum (Museu de Fundacao Calouste Gulbenkian) Deeded by Armenian oil tycoon Calouste Gulbenkian, who died in 1955, this museum houses one of the world's finest private art collections, including Egyptian, Greek, and Roman antiquities; Islamic art; and vases, prints, and lacquerwork from China and Japan. There are also European manuscripts, 15th- to 19th-century paintings and sculptures, and important collections of 18th-century French decorative works, French Impressionist paintings, Lalique jewelry, and glassware. Notable are two Rembrandts, Rubens's *Portrait of Hélène Fourment,* and *Portrait of Madame Claude Monet* by Pierre-August Renoir.

Av. de Berna 45, Saldana district. ✆ **21-795-02-36.** Admission 3€ ($3.45) adults, free for children 9 and under, students, and seniors. Free admission for all on Sun. Wed–Sun 10am–6pm; Tues 4–6pm.

Jerónimos Monastery (Mosteiro dos Jerónimos) Built in 1502, the monastery is a masterpiece of Manueline architecture, built in the 16th century to commemorate the discoveries of Portuguese navigators, and one of the finest sights in the city.

Praca do Imperio, Belém district. ✆ **21-362-00-34.** Free admission to church; to cloisters 3€ ($3.45) for adults, 1.20€ ($1.40) students, free for children and seniors. Tues–Sun, 10am–6pm.

The Maritime Museum (Museu de Marinha) Located in the Jerónimos Monastery's west wing, this museum is one of the most important of its kind in Europe, and contains hundreds of ship models, from 15th-century sailing ships to 20th-century warships.

Praca do Imperio, Belém district. ✆ **21-362-00-19.** Admission 3€ ($3.45) adults, 1.50€ ($1.75) students and seniors, free for children under 6 and seniors. Tues–Sun 10am–6pm.

St. George's Castle (Castelo Saño Jorge) This hilltop fortress is believed to have predated the Romans. Many of the walls still standing were erected by the Moors. The finest view of the Tagus and the Alfama can be had from the castle's esplanades and ramparts. On the grounds you'll also find olive, pine, and cork trees, and may encounter swans and rare white peacocks.

Rua da Costa do Castelo, Alfama district. ✆ **21-887-7244.** Free admission. Apr–Sept daily 9am–9pm.

LOCAL FLAVORS

Fresh seafood is a best bet. Typical dishes include fresh *bacalhau* (codfish), steamed mussels with ham and sausages cooked in white wine, and *acorda de*

marisco, a spicy seafood soup. Meat-eaters will want to try the roasted lamb. Try your meal with a Portuguese wine. The cafes (such as those around the Rossio, the city's main square) are great places to people-watch. A nice Lisbon restaurant with a friendly owner is **Conventual,** Praca das Flores 45 (✆ **21-390-91-96**), decorated with panels from baroque churches, religious statues, and other bric-a-brac. It's open for lunch and dinner, and main courses run about 13€ to 22€ ($15–$21). Reservations are required.

BEST BUYS

Handicrafts, ceramics, and embroidered linens are all good buys. Also look for gold filigree and silver jewelry, knitwear, leather goods, colorful Portuguese wall tiles, and items made out of cork. Many smaller shops close from 12:30pm to 3pm. There are more than 200 shops in the modern **Amoreiras complex,** located in the Amoreiras district (take a taxi), and upscale shopping can be found downtown on Rua Garrett in the **Chiado district.** Other shopping districts include **Baixa** (between the Rossio and the Tagus), **Rua do Ouro, Rua da Prata,** and **Rua Augusta.** The new shopping complex **Colombo** is located in the Benfica district and is the largest shopping mall on the Iberian Peninsula.

7 Spain

Spain offers fascinating history, pretty beaches, Moorish palaces, quaint villages, and, of course, Picasso, but the country is also full of modern-day vitality. Things began to change with the death of Generalissimo Francisco Franco and the country's 1986 entry into the European Union, and today the nation is undergoing a cultural renaissance that delights visitors, with cities like Barcelona, home of the 1992 Olympics, getting used to a new-found prosperity.

CURRENCY As of March 2002, Spain switched entirely to the euro (€) for its currency. One euro is made up of 100 euro cents. The exchange rate at press time was $1 = .87€.

LANGUAGE Spanish; Spanish and Catalan in Barcelona; Castilian Spanish and Catalan in Palma de Mallorca. Many young people also speak English or German.

BARCELONA

Barcelona, Spain's second largest city and the capital of Catalonia, was developed as a port by the Romans and has long been a Mediterranean center of commerce. Recently it's been discovered by the cruise lines, which are attracted by the city's prime location on the Iberian Peninsula and by its wealth of historical, cultural, and artistic offerings. Nearly every major cruise line visits here today, and many use the Port of Barcelona as a turnaround point.

Once home to Picasso, Miró, and Dalí, Barcelona mixes medieval architecture with Modernism, a style for which the city is world-renowned. Roman ruins, the narrow streets of the Gothic Quarter, buildings from the 13th and 15th centuries, and a Bohemian atmosphere exist side by side with I. M. Pei designs and the whimsical creations of Gaudí. In addition to beautiful architecture, the city boasts great museums, friendly people, pleasant cafes, and a very active nightlife, with bars and late-night clubs.

Barcelona even has sandy beaches thanks to a recently reclaimed waterfront.

Barcelona



Botafumiero **11**
Casa Milà **9**
Catalunya Square (Plaça de Catalunya) **5**
Catedral de Barcelona **7**
Fundacio Miró **2**
La Sagrada Familia **10**
Les Rambles **6**
Montjuïc cable car **3**
Museu Picasso **8**
Olympic Stadium **1**
Tibidabo funicular **4**




Plaça de Francesc Macia
Travessara de Gràcia
Carrer de Buenos Aires
Carrer de Londres
Carrer de Paris
Avinguda Diagonal
Gran de Gràcia
Travessara de Gràcia
Av. de Sant Antoni Maria Claret
Carrer de la Industria
Carrer de Còrsega
EIXAMPLE
Carrer de Provença
Carrer de Rosselló
Carrer Enric Granados
Carrer de Balmes
Rambla de Catalunya
Passeig de Gràcia
Carrer de Pau Claris
Avinguda Diagonal
Carrer de Roger de Flor
Plaça de la Sagrada Família
Carrer de Mallorca
Carrer de València
Carrer d'Aragó
Carrer del Comte Borrell
Carrer del Comte d'Urgell
Carrer de Villarroel
Carrer de Casanova
Carrer de Muntaner
Carrer d'Aribau
Carrer del Consell de Cent
Carrer de la Diputació
Carrer de R. de Lluria
Carrer del Bruc
Carrer de Girona
Carrer de Bailén
Passeig de Sant Joan
Carrer de Nàpols
Carrer de Sicília
Gran Via de les Corts Catalanes
Plaça de la Universitat
Carrer de Pelai
Ronda Universitat
Plaça de Tetuan
Carrer de Casp
Ronda de Sant Antoni
Plaça Catalunya
Carrer d'Ausias Marc
Carrer de Sardenya
RAVAL
Plaça Urquinaona
Ronda de Sant Pere
Carrer d'Ali Bei
Carrer de Ribes
Ronda Sant Pau
Carrer de Hospital
Av. Portal de l'Àngel
La Rambla
BARRI GÒTIC
Via Laietana
Passeig de Lluís Companys
Carrer de la Marina
Carrer de Sant Pau
C. de Ferran
C. de la Princesa
Passeig de Pujades
Carrer Nou de la Rambla
Carrer del Comerç
Passeig de Picasso
Avda. de les Drassanes
La Rambla
LA RIBERA
PARC DE LA CIUTADELLA
Carrer de Wellington
Villa Olímpica
Carrer Ample
Pg. Isabel II
Passeig de Colom
Moll de la Fusta
Placa Portal de la Pau
Avinguda d'Icaria
Moll d'Espanya
Port Vell
BARCELONETA
Passeig Marítim
0
1/4 mi
0
0.25 km
Information

FROMMER'S FAVORITE BARCELONA EXPERIENCES

- **Walking through the Barri Gótic (Gothic Quarter).** You can wander for hours getting lost—that's part of the fun—and seeing the great cathedral, fountains, vintage stores, cobblestones, and cafes. Exercise caution here at night, however.
- **Strolling along the Ramblas.** Victor Hugo called the Ramblas "the most beautiful street in the world." It runs from Placa de Catalunya to the sea, and is a tree-lined boulevard boasting 24-hour performers, flower vendors, birds in cages, cafes, and shops.
- **Checking the views from Montjuïc or Tibidabo.** Both of these mountain parks are accessible by funicular.
- **Exploring the Museu Picasso.** Two converted palaces on a medieval street hold an impressive collection of the artist's works.
- **Enjoying the fantastical work of Antoni Gaudí.** The designer's creations in Barcelona include his masterpiece apartment building on Paseo de Gracia and the Templo Expiatorio de la Sagrada Familia.
- **Fundacio Joan Miró.** Miró's brilliant colors and abstracts made him one of Spain's beloved painters. This comprehensive display of his work is well worth a visit.

COMING ASHORE & GETTING AROUND Your ship may dock close enough to the Old Port area to walk to shopping and restaurants, but getting from the port, which is on a long peninsula, requires a circuitous route and can be tricky. The city's notorious pickpockets make the task a bit risky, too. A bridge (opened in 2000) cuts about .4km (¼ mile) from the walk; however, it's a drawbridge that opens several times a day, which sometimes causes delays. Our recommendation is that you take a cab or use the shuttle service provided by the cruise line. **Taxis** are available outside the terminal. The rate begins at about 2.10€ ($2.40), and there's a charge of about 85€ (95¢) per kilometer after that. There is a special supplement if the taxi is taken inside the pier area.

The city also has a good **Metro** and **bus** system. During the summer, there is also **Bus Turistic,** which passes by a dozen of the most popular sights. You can get on and off as you please and also ride the **Tibidabo funicular** and the **Montjuïc** cable car and funicular (both for panoramic city views) for the price of a single ticket. Tickets can be purchased on the bus or at the transportation booth at Placa de Catalunya, for about 13€ ($15) for a 1-day pass, 18€ ($21) for 2 days.

La Rambla is about 1.6km to 3.2km (1–2 miles) from the pier, depending on where your ship docks.

THE BEST SHORE EXCURSIONS

City Highlights (3½–4½ hr.; $32–$53): This bus and walking tour includes the Gothic Quarter, a stop at Montjuïc for the views, the Olympic Stadium, Gaudí's whimsical Sagrada Familia, La Rambla, and Catalunya Square.

Museums Tour (3½–4 hr.; $48–$62): Includes a visit to the Picasso Museum and the medieval "Ribera" quarter and/or a drive to Montjuïc for the impressive views, and/or the Miró Foundation, and/or a drive past buildings created by Antoni Gaudí.

Pilgrimage to Montserrat (5–7hr.; $69–$126): This tour heads 58km (36 miles) north of Barcelona to the sacred Mountain of Montserrat, one of Spain's natural wonders. The highest peak of this jagged mountain range reaches 12,216m (4,072 ft.). Approximately halfway up the mountain stands the

famous Montserrat Monastery, built by Philip II between 1563 and 1592. It is world-famous for its shrine of the Virgin Mary, Our Lady of Montserrat. The shrine was dedicated to the image of the Virgin and has been considered for many years one of Spain's most significant places of pilgrimage. Afterward, listen to the famous Escolania choir from the monastery's School of Music. After returning to Barcelona, enjoy a brief tour of the city before returning to the ship. Lunch is included.

THE TOP ATTRACTIONS

La Sagrada Familia Antoni Gaudí's creation was begun in 1882 and has never been finished, but the Church of the Holy Family is a bizarre wonder and should be at the top of everyone's list of landmarks to visit. The designer's style has been described as Art Nouveau run wild, and it is on full display here. Some predict it will be completed by the mid–21st century.

Majora, 401. ✆ **93/455-0247.** Admission 6€ ($6.90) adults, 4€ ($4.60) students and seniors, under 9 free. Apr–Sept daily 9am–8pm; Oct–Mar daily 9am–6pm.

Miró Foundation (Fundació Joan Miró) This museum, located in Montjuïc park, pays tribute to one of Spain's greatest artists, and contains some 10,000 of the surrealist's works. Included are paintings, graphics, and sculptures.

Placa de Neptú, Parc de Montjuïc. ✆ **93/443-9470.** Admission for permanent collection and temporary exhibits, 7.50€ ($8.65) adults, 3€ ($3.45) students, free for children 14 and under; admission permanent collection only, 4€ ($4.60) adults, 2€ ($2.30) students and seniors, free for children 14 and under. July–Sept Tues–Wed and Fri–Sat 10am–8pm, Thurs 10am–9:30pm, Sun 10am–2:30pm; Oct–June Tues–Sat 10am–7pm, holidays 10am–2:30pm.

Museu Picasso Barcelona's cathedral is Gothic in style. The basilica, except for the 19th-century western facade, was begun at the end of the 13th century and completed in the 15th century. The cloister offers a museum of medieval art. The three naves have wonderful Gothic details.

Montcada 15–19. ✆ **93/319-6310.** Admission to permanent collection 5€ ($5.75) adults, 2.50€ ($2.85) students, free for children 12 and under. Everyone is free 1st Sun of every month. Admission to temporary exhibits is extra. Tues–Sat and holidays 10am–8pm; Sun 10am–3pm.

LOCAL FLAVORS

The big meal of the day here is lunch *(comida)* and is served at midafternoon. Fresh seafood is a best bet, and a good place to try it is **Botafumiero,** Gran de Grácia 81 (✆ **93-218-42-30**). Main courses run 17€ to 42€ ($20–$48); reservations are recommended for the dining rooms, but not necessary if you dine at the bar. In general, late afternoon or early evening is a good time to try tapas, or Spanish hors d'oeuvres. Dinner is served late. Try the local wines, including cava, the Barcelona version of bubbly (the kind marked "brut" is sweeter than the kind marked "brut nature").

BEST BUYS

Shop in Barcelona for leather goods including shoes, jewelry, high fashion, artworks, and straw products. The main shopping area surrounds the **Plaça de Catalunya**. Upscale shopping can be found on **Passeig de Gracia** from the Avinguda Diagonal to the Plaça de Catalunya (upper Rambla). Traditional shopping can be found between the Rambla and Via Laietana. Dozens of galleries are located in the **Gothic Quarter (Barri Gótic)** and near the Picasso museum. Most shops, with the exception of some large department stores, close from 1:30 to 4pm.

CADIZ

Cádiz is 3,000 years old, making it the Western world's oldest continuously inhabited city. It's a venerable seaport, where thousands of ships embarked for the New World. Christopher Columbus started his second and fourth voyages here.

Today, as in years past, it's a bustling port. The city is geographically divided into two. Lying on the isthmus is the modern city, with its busy commercial area. To the other side are the historic districts of El Populo and Santa Maria, with narrow streets and ancient stone walls, and plenty of local character.

Despite the city's age, there are few remnants of antiquity here, although you'll find an impressive cathedral and some good museums. The Oratorio de San Felipe Neri, where the first Spanish constitution was drafted in 1812, has the painting *Immaculate Conception* by Murillo, and the Santa Cruz Chapel has three frescoes by Goya.

Cádiz also has nice beaches and two world-class golf courses, Montecastillo (designed by Jack Nicklaus) and Novo Sancti Petri (designed by Steve Ballesteros).

Despite all this, the cruise lines view Cádiz as more of a jumping-off point to explore **Seville,** one of Spain's prettiest cities and also, thanks to Don Juan and Carmen (aided by Mozart and Bizet), one of its most romantic. It's located about 121km (75 miles) from Cádiz. Shore excursions are also offered to **Jerez,** home of Spanish sherry and Andalusian horses.

FROMMER'S FAVORITE CADIZ EXPERIENCES

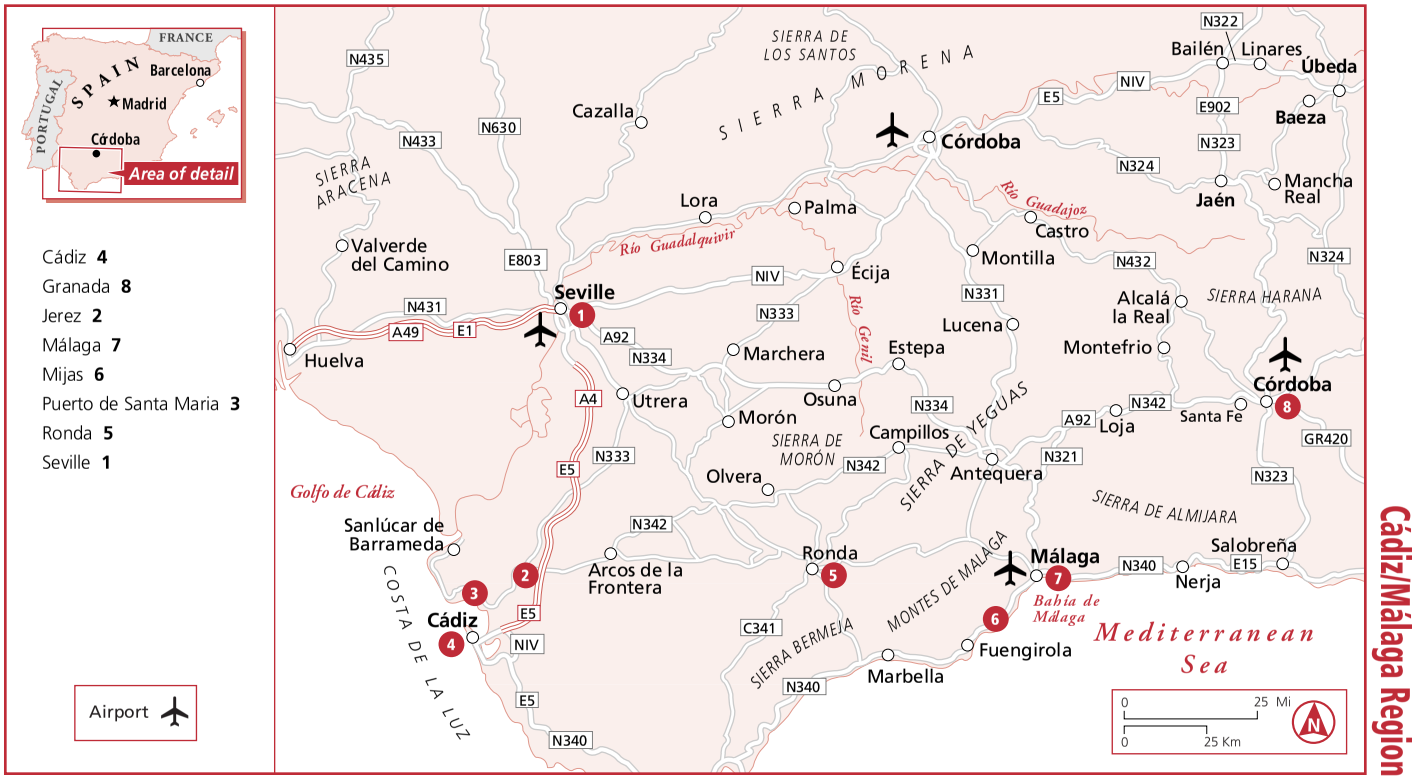
- **Sitting at a sidewalk cafe and people-watching.** The best spot in Cádiz is the Plaza de San Juan de Dios.
- **Strolling through Old Cádiz.** Explore the narrow streets of this pedestrian zone. You might also want to check out the city's parks, such as Parque Genoves, which looks onto the Atlantic.
- **Taking a shore excursion to Seville or Jerez.** (See below.)

THE BEST SHORE EXCURSIONS

Cádiz & Puerto de Santa Maria (3½ hr.; $40–$50): This city-highlights tour includes a visit to a local winery. From the bus, you'll see the monument to the Constitution of 1810, the city's ramparts, the historic Castle of San Sebastian, the Cathedral of Cádiz, and other city highlights. Cross the harbor to Puerto Santa Maria to visit an elegant estate and renowned winery. May include a Flamenco demo.

Cádiz, Jerez & the Royal School of Equestrian Art (7½ hr.; $72–$96; or visit the horse farm separately, 4½ hr.; $63; or Jerez separately, 4½ hr.; $42): After a brief drive past the highlights of Cádiz, travel for about an hour to the old town of Jerez, where white mansions are guarded by historic walls and towers. Stop at a local cellar for a taste of brandy and sherry. Visit the equestrian school to see the Andalusian horses put through their training. Includes lunch.

Romantic Seville (8–9 hr.; $99–$159): A full-day excursion takes you to this historic and beautiful city. Travel by bus for 2 hours through the countryside. In Seville, visit the Cathedral de Sevilla, the world's third largest cathedral, where you can see the tombs of King Fernando III and Christopher Columbus. Also visit Seville's Alcazar, a 14th-century Mudéjar palace, and the Jewish quarter. Time is allowed to stroll Seville's charming streets. Enjoy lunch at a local restaurant or hotel.


FRANCE
SPAIN
PORTUGAL
Barcelona
Madrid
Córdoba
Area of detail
Cádiz 4
Granada 8
Jerez 2
Málaga 7
Mijas 6
Puerto de Santa Maria 3
Ronda 5
Seville 1
Airport
SIERRA DE LOS SANTOS
SIERRA MORENA
SIERRA ARACENA
SIERRA HARANA
SIERRA DE MORÓN
SIERRA DE YEGUAS
SIERRA DE ALMIJARA
SIERRA BERMEJA
MONTES DE MALAGA
COSTA DE LA LUZ
Río Guadalquivir
Río Guadajoz
Río Genil
Golfo de Cádiz
Bahía de Málaga
Mediterranean Sea
Cazalla
Córdoba
Bailén
Linares
Úbeda
Baeza
Jaén
Mancha Real
Lora
Palma
Castro
Montilla
Valverde del Camino
Écija
Seville
Alcalá la Real
Lucena
Estepa
Montefrio
Huelva
Marchera
Utrera
Osuna
Morón
Campillos
Loja
Santa Fe
Córdoba
Olvera
Antequera
Sanlúcar de Barrameda
Arcos de la Frontera
Ronda
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Salobreña
Nerja
Cádiz
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N431
A49
E1
E803
A92
N334
A4
N333
E5
N342
NIV
N321
N340
C341
E902
N322
N323
N324
N432
N331
E15
GR420

COMING ASHORE & GETTING AROUND It's about a 10-minute walk from the pier to the city center. **Taxis** are available at the pier. **Buses** and **trains** run regularly to Seville, about 2 hours away.

THE TOP ATTRACTIONS

Catedral de Cádiz This magnificent 18th-century baroque building has a neoclassical interior. Music lovers come here to pay respects at the tomb of Cádiz-born Manuel de Falla. The cathedral's treasury/museum offers a collection of Spanish silver, embroidery, and paintings.

Plaza Catedral. ✆ **956/28-61-54.** Free admission to cathedral; museum admission 3.00€ ($3.45) adults, 1.50€ ($1.75) children. Tues–Fri 10am–1pm and 4:30pm–7pm; Sat–Sun 10am–1pm.

Museo de Cádiz This museum contains one of Spain's most important Zurbaran collections, as well as paintings by Rubens and Murillo. The archaeology section displays Roman, Carthaginian, and Phoenician finds. There are also exhibits of pottery, baskets, textiles, and leatherwork.

Plaza de Mini. ✆ **956/21-43-00.** Admission 2€ ($2.30); free on Sun. Tues 2:30–8pm; Wed–Sat 9am–8pm; Sun 9:30am–2:30pm.

Oratorio de San Felipe Neri The Cortes (Parliament) met here in 1812 to proclaim its constitution. There's a history museum, and Murillo's *Immaculate Conception* is on display.

Santa Ines. ✆ **956/21-16-12.** Admission 1.50€ ($1.75). Aug–June daily 8:30am–10am and 7:30–9:45pm. Closed July.

LOCAL FLAVORS

Seafood is big here and sardines are a favorite local treat. Try them, or any other fine fish dish, with local wine at **Achuri,** Calle Plocia, 15 (✆ **956-25-36-13**), a favorite family-run restaurant since 1947.

BEST BUYS

Best buys are wine of the Jerez region, Andalusian handicrafts, leather, and ceramics. The main shopping area is on Columela and San Francisco streets.

MALAGA

Málaga is the Costa del Sol region's historic capital, and is today a bustling commercial and residential center. The city's most famous citizen was none other than Pablo Picasso, born here in 1881 at Plaza de la Merced, in the city center. Unfortunately, Picasso left little of his spirit and only a small selection of his work in his birthplace. The city does offer some interesting historical sights, however, including a 16th-century cathedral and the Moorish Alcazaba Fortress, and is a pleasant place to explore on your own, although the town can be quite crowded with tourists in the summer.

Málaga is also the port for nearby Granada, the famed Alhambra, and other inland sights.

COMING ASHORE & GETTING AROUND Ships dock at a pier close to town, or at another pier that's a short cab ride away. **Taxis** are usually available pier-side. Watch out for purse-snatchers as you walk around the town, since Málaga has one of the highest crime rates in Spain. It's not recommended you walk alone around the area of the Castillo de Gibralfaro in particular.

FROMMER'S FAVORITE MALAGA EXPERIENCES

- **Checking out the Alcazaba.** Ferdinand and Isabella slept at this Moorish palace, the remains of which are within easy walking distance of the city center.

- **Trying some local wine.** Sweet dessert wines are a Málaga specialty.
- **Taking a bus or cab to the beach.** Depending on how much time you have in port, you can head to Torremolinos, about 15km (9 miles) west of Málaga, or other resort areas on Costa del Sol.
- **Heading inland to Granada.** (See below.)

THE BEST SHORE EXCURSIONS

Granada & the Alhambra (8½ hr.; $119–$159): This tour highlights historic Granada and includes a number of interesting sights along the 2-hour drive, such as the town of Casabermeja, with its white houses, and Las Pedrizas, a scenic mountain pass. In Granada, visit the Muslim-Hispano complex known as the Alhambra, a spectacular example of Moorish architecture encircled by walls and towers. Also visit the nearby Generalife, the royal residence surrounded by water gardens; and El Vino Gate, commissioned by Carlos V in the 16th century. Includes lunch.

Granada Transfer (8½ hr.; $52–$64): A 2-hour bus ride each way to Granada, where you will have free time to explore on your own and still be guaranteed to get back to the ship on time.

Málaga City Tour (4 hr.; $32–$46): On this tour you will see the Alcazaba and the Gibralfaro, an old Muslim castle. Also visit the city's Renaissance-style cathedral. Drive past the Roman theater, the facade of the bullring, and the 19th-century post office and City Hall. The tour may include a stop at a local tavern to taste the region's sweet wine, or a side trip to Mijas.

Mijas & Countryside (4–4½ hr.; $44–$52): This tour highlights Spanish country life and visits Mijas, a classical village with beautiful views of the coast. Visit San Sebastian church in the old part of town and the Barrio Santa Ana, with its whitewashed houses. Also check out the bullring, built in 1920. You can, if you want, explore the streets riding a donkey. Or you can visit a local cafe or souvenir and handicraft shops.

THE TOP ATTRACTIONS

Alcazaba The remains of a Moorish palace are within easy walking distance of the city center (look for the signs pointing the way up the hill). The fortress was erected mostly in the 9th or 10th century, and among those who have stayed here were Ferdinand and Isabella. The Alcazaba now houses an archaeological museum. The grounds are beautiful, offering orange trees, purple bougainvillea, and some of the best views on the Costa del Sol.

Plaza de la Aduana, Alcazabilla. ✆ **95/221-60-05.** Free admission. Tues–Fri 9:30am–8pm; Sat 10am–1pm; Sun 10am–2pm.

Málaga Cathedral This vast and impressive 16th-century Renaissance cathedral, located in the city center, has been declared a national monument. Its most notable interior feature is the richly ornamented choir stalls.

Plaza Obispo. ✆ **95/221-59-17.** Admission 1.50€ ($1.75). Daily 10am–12:45pm and 4–6pm. Closed holidays.

Museo de Bellas Artes (Málaga Fine Arts Museum) A former Moorish palace located behind the cathedral, this art museum has a gallery devoted to native son Pablo Picasso, as well as works by Murillo, Ribera, and Morales, and Andalusian antiques, mosaics, and sculptures.

Calle San Agustín, 8. ✆ **95/221-83-82.** Admission 1.50€ ($1.75). Tues–Fri 10am–1:30pm and 4–7pm; Sat–Sun 10am–1:30pm.

LOCAL FLAVORS

Tapas are served here at typical tapas bars. Or, you may consider ordering hors d'oeuvres parador, a tableful of the small dishes, at **Parador de Málaga-Gibralfaro,** Monte Gibralfaro (✆ **95-222-19-02**), a government-run restaurant with wonderful views from its mountainside setting.

BEST BUYS

Shop here for the region's rustic pottery, leather goods, silver and gold jewelry, and local wine. Most shops close between 1 and 5pm. An exception is **El Corte Ingles** department store. Small mall shops and boutiques can be found along **Calle Larios.** Outside the town limits, the most comprehensive collection of ceramics and pottery can be found at **La Vistillas,** Carretera Mijas, Km 2 (about 2km/1¼ miles from the center of Málaga).

PALMA DE MALLORCA

Known as "the Island of Tranquility," Mallorca (also spelled Majorca) is the largest of the 16 Balearic Islands, offering some 499km (310 miles) of coastline. The other main islands in the chain are Ibiza (which is also visited by some cruise ships) and Menorca.

Lying about 97km (60 miles) from the Spanish mainland and 209km (130 miles) from Barcelona, Mallorca offers a lush (some trees are more than 1,000 years old) and rugged landscape, and picturesque villages (and also some big high-rise hotels). It is a popular resort area, particularly with northern Europeans. Millions of tourists come here each year. Juan Carlos, king of Spain, has a residence in Marivent in Cala Mayor.

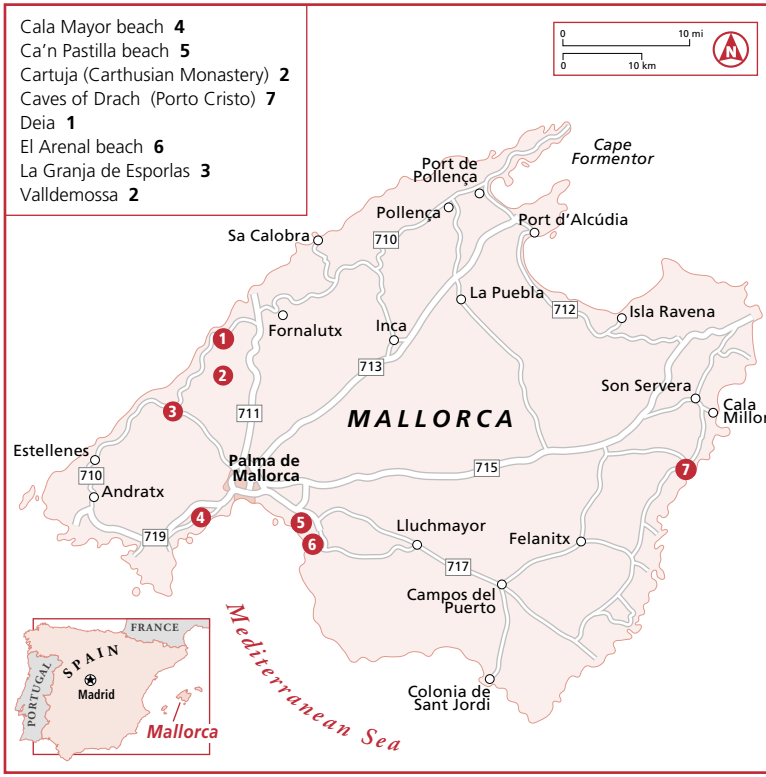
Palma, the capital, is a cosmopolitan city with a population of 300,000, and relies on tourism for its economy. There are big hotels and fast-food restaurants, but there are also historical sights left by the Romans, the Arabs, and later Spanish kings who at one time occupied the island. The Gothic Quarter of Palma offers a maze of narrow alleys and cobblestone streets.

Outside the city are mountains, lush valleys, fine beaches, and little fishing villages where life is still simple. It's not surprising that writers, painters, and musicians have found inspiration here.

Arrival by sea here is particularly impressive, with the skyline characterized by the Bellver Castle and the city's Gothic cathedral. Plan to be on deck so you can catch the view.

FROMMER'S FAVORITE MALLORCA EXPERIENCES

- **Renting a car and heading to the mountains.** Drive west on C-719, then north on C-710, and back on C-711 (at Sóller) to pass through some of the most beautiful coastal and mountain scenery on the island.
- **Heading to the beach.** The best are Ca'n Pastilla and El Arenal, although they can get crowded. Another good bet is Cala Mayor.
- **Exploring the Gothic Quarter.** Palma's Gothic Quarter offers narrow cobblestone streets and interesting sights such as the Moorish baths (Banys Arabs, Carrer Serra, 7).
- **Spending some quiet time in Deia.** This serene little Mallorcan village is located about 27km (17 miles) from Palma (it's accessible by bus) and offers mountain and sea views, stone houses, olive trees, and creeping bougainvillea. It's long been an artist's retreat, and notables who have lived here include Robert Graves, the English poet and novelist.



- **Visiting the Carthusian Monastery in Valldemossa.** Chopin and George Sand wintered here. See "Valldemossa & Chopin" under "The Best Shore Excursions," below.

COMING ASHORE & GETTING AROUND Ships dock about 15 minutes (by vehicle) from the center of town. **Taxis** are generally available at the pier. Buses run from Palma to popular destinations that include Valldemossa, Deia, and Sóller. There are also **trains** to Sóller. **Rental cars** are available from **Atesa** at Passeig Marítim (✆ **971/78-98-96**) and range from about 45€ to 91€ ($52–$105) per day. **Avis** at Passeig Marítim (✆ **971/73-07-20**) offers cars 55€ to 169€ ($63–$194) per day. Reservations for either are strongly recommended.

THE BEST SHORE EXCURSIONS

Valldemossa & Chopin (3½–4 hr.; $39–$47): This tour explores the west side of the island. Drive 45 minutes to the quaint village of Valldemossa, located at the foot of the Northern Mountain Range, where the history dates back to the 14th century. Visit **Cartuja,** a former royal residence turned monastery in the Middle Ages. In 1838, both George Sand and Frederic Chopin came to live at the monastery. Sand later wrote a book titled *A Winter in Majorca* about that visit, and Chopin composed "Raindrop Prelude" and other works here. The tour includes a short piano recital.

Gibraltar

The famous rock at the entrance to the Mediterranean is visited by some ships and simply pointed out by others (as in, "We do a daylight passing of the Rock of Gibraltar").

If you do set foot on the limestone rock—which is technically a peninsula rather than an island—you will find a small British colony from which you can view Africa on a clear day. In addition to spectacular views, Gibraltar offers a small town (also called Gibraltar) with Victorian architecture, natural caves, historical sights, museums, lovely botanical gardens, and the famous Barbary apes, as well as beautiful beaches.

In town, the **duty-free shops** are a big attraction. Best buys here include English china, crystal, Lladro and Nao figurines, English woolens, electronics, jewelry, watches, cosmetics, and perfume. And you can stop at one of the pubs on Main Street for fish and chips or steak-and-kidney pie, and a pint of ale.

The official language is English and the currency is the Gibraltar pound, which is equivalent to pound sterling. But U.S. dollars are also readily accepted.

Ships dock about 1.6km (1 mile), or a 20-minute walk, from the center of town. And taxis and a shuttle service are both usually available at the pier.

The **Rock of Gibraltar tour** (2–2½ hr.; $38–$51) offered by many cruise lines includes a scenic drive, with a stop at **St. Michael's Cave,** a natural grotto with spectacular stalagmites (you have to climb a lot of steps to see them), and the **Apes' Den,** inhabited by some 20 semi-wild Barbary apes (there are some 140 others in a pack in the Great Siege area). The apes were introduced as pets on the island by the British more than 200 years ago. According to legend, Gibraltar stays British as long as the apes remain here. The tour also includes time to shop in town. Some tours add a ride on the **Gibraltar Cable Car,** which takes you up the face of the Rock to the very top, and some include a visit to the **Great Siege Tunnels,** an ingenious defense system dating back to the 18th century.

Palma de Mallorca City Tour (4 hr.; $38–$48): Explore the capital of the Balearic Islands, including the Bellver Castle, Spanish Village, Almudaina Palace, cathedral, and Gothic Quarter. The drive back to the ship passes La Rambla, Paseo Mallorca, and the Maritime Promenade.

La Granja (4½ hr.; $39–$49): This tour follows a scenic route past lovely villages and popular resort areas, and includes a visit to La Granja de Esporlas, a 17th-century manor house set on what is considered one of the most idyllic spots on the island. There are beautiful fountains and formal gardens, and the house offers a museum of daily life and a wine cellar. The tour may also include a visit to Puerto Andratx, a quaint fishing port. A tasting of regional specialties is included.

THE TOP ATTRACTIONS

Art Espanyol Contemporani This art museum features Picasso, Miró, Dalí, and Juan Gris in its collection, along with other 20th-century Spanish artists. The best-known work here is Picasso's *Head of a Woman.*

Carrer Sant Miquel 11. ✆ **971/71-35-15.** Admission 3€ ($3.45) adults, 1.50€ ($2.30) seniors and students. Mon–Fri 10am–6:30pm; Sat 10am–1:30pm.

Castell de Bellver Erected in 1309, this hilltop castle with its double moat was once a summer palace of kings and now houses the Museu Municipal, which offers a collection of archaeological objects and coins. But it's the view that attracts visitors. In fact, Bellver means beautiful view.

Between Palma and Illetas. ✆ **971/73-06-57.** Admission 2€ ($2.30), 1€ ($1.15) children, students, and seniors. Mon–Sat 8am–8:30pm.

Catedral (Le Seu) The Gothic cathedral is located in old town, and overlooks the sea. It was started during the reign of Jaume II (1276–1311) and completed in 1610. Of note is the scalloped-edged, wrought-iron canopy by Gaudí over the main altar. The treasury contains pieces of the True Cross and relics of St. Sebastián.

Carrer Palau Reial. ✆ **971/72-31-30.** Free admission to cathedral; museum and treasury admission 3.50€ ($4). Mon–Fri 10am–5:30pm; Sat 10am–2:30pm. Museum and cathedral hours are often subject to change.

Palau de l'Almudaina This fortress is a reminder that the island was once ruled by Muslims, and was used as a royal residence by Mallorcan kings. Inside is a museum with antiques, arts, suits of armor, and Gobelin tapestries. The grounds offer Moorish-style gardens and fountains, as well as panoramic views of the harbor of Palma.

Carrer Palau Reial. ✆ **971/21-41-34.** Admission 3.15€ ($3.65) adults, 2.25€ ($2.60) children, free on Wed. Mon–Fri 10am–5:45pm; Sat 10am–1:15pm.

LOCAL FLAVORS

Meat-eaters will want to try the Mallorcan specialty, pork loin *(lomo),* or sausage *(sabrasada).* Other favorites include fish pie. Finish your meal with a *café carajillo* (coffee with cognac).

BEST BUYS

Shop here for Mallorca pearls, inlaid wood products, needlework, pottery, handblown glass, olive wood carvings, and leather goods (including shoes). The upscale shops are located along **Avenida Jaume III** and the **Paseo del Borne.** Good shopping opportunities can also be found on San Miguel, carrer Sindicato, Jaume II, carrer Platería, and Via Roman. Most shops close between 1:30 and 4:30pm, as well as on Sundays.

8 Turkey

Turkey is literally where East meets West (Istanbul sits where Europe and Asia touch) and is probably the most exotic country you'll visit on your European cruise. It's a land of mosques and minarets, sultans' treasures and crowded bazaars, unmatched Greek and Roman archaeological sites and holy Christian landmarks. While its cities teem with the energy of a modern nation looking to the West, its villages remain much as they've been for the past several hundred years.

CURRENCY Turkish lira (TL) notes are issued in 10,000-, 50,000-, 100,000-, 250,000-, 500,000-, 1 million, and 5 million denominations. The rate of exchange at press time was $1 = 1,375,500 TL. Because of the wide fluctuation of Turkish currency, prices are often quoted in U.S. dollars or other more stable currencies, and it is best to only exchange what you intend to spend.

LANGUAGE Turkish and Kurdish are spoken here as well as English, French, and German.

ISTANBUL

The city where the continents of Asia and Europe meet is chaotic and congested, yet bold and exciting. A diverse mix of architectural styles, religions, and people form the backdrop and backbone of this cosmopolitan metropolis, where modern cars careen through the streets past historic monuments that reveal a rich and ancient history. The senses spring to life here—the smell of the spice market, the sound of prayer, the taste of traditional Turkish dishes, the feel of a Turkish carpet, and the sight of awe-inspiring treasures at every turn. Istanbul served as the capital of three successive empires—the Roman, Byzantine, and Ottoman—and this legacy lives on. Everywhere you look, museums, churches, palaces, grand mosques, and bazaars attest to the city's glorious history.

FROMMER'S FAVORITE ISTANBUL EXPERIENCES

- **Exploring the old section.** Most of the major attractions are located in this area and are within walking distance of each other.
- **Shopping at the Grand Bazaar.** It's a sight to behold as 4,000 shopkeepers hawk their wares and patrons browse and bargain through a labyrinth of passageways.

COMING ASHORE & GETTING AROUND Ships drop anchor on the Bosphorus on the European side of the city. **Taxis**—yellow, metered, and relatively inexpensive—wait to pick up passengers, and you'll also find plenty of them traveling throughout the city. The starting rate is about $1, and there is a surcharge after midnight. Tip drivers to the nearest lira. **Bus and tram service** are also available, and cruise lines usually provide shuttle buses to downtown (which usually drop you off near the expensive rug shops).

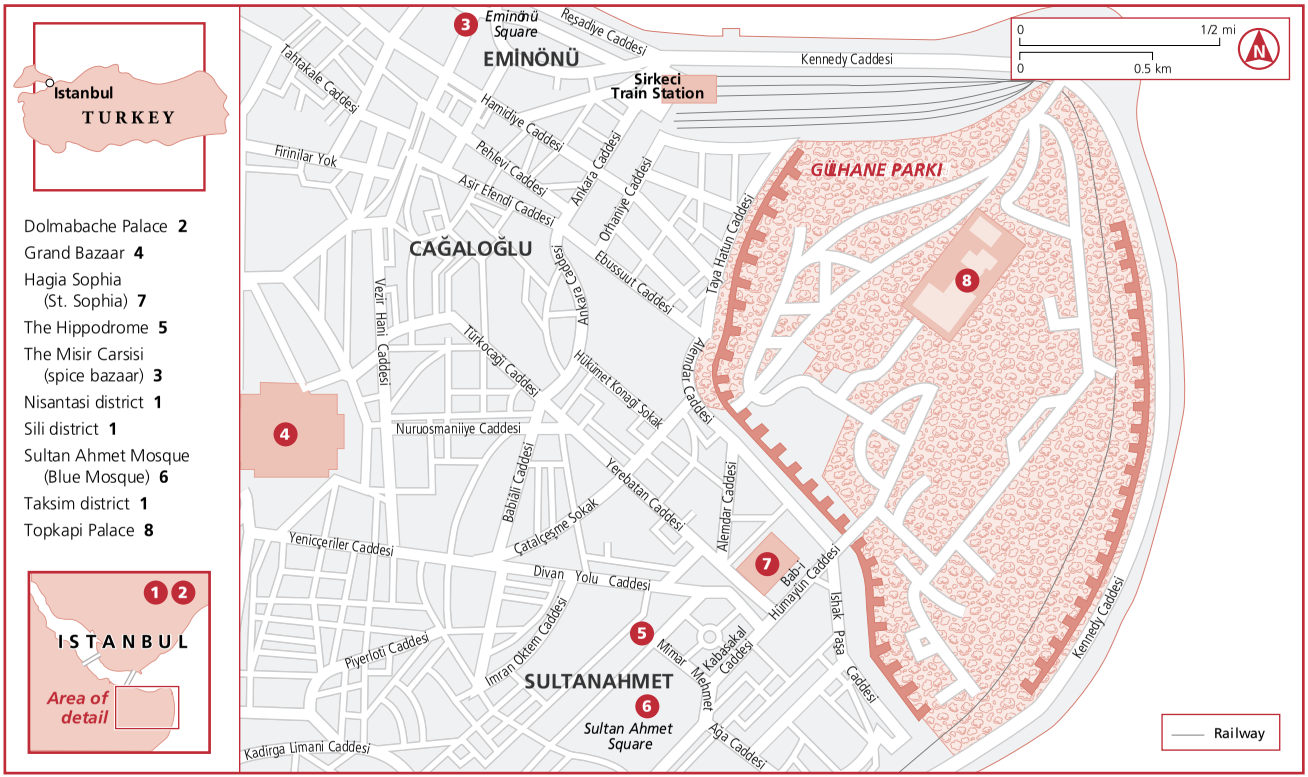
The best way to explore the old section of the city is by foot. All of the monuments are within walking distance of each other. It's a healthy walk from the pier to the Blue Mosque, and with all the crazy drivers and the generally hectic pace, you're best off taking the shuttle offered by the cruise line, or a cab.

THE BEST SHORE EXCURSIONS

Highlights of Istanbul (7–9 hr.; $89–$97): Includes the Hippodrome, once the largest chariot race grounds of the Byzantine Empire; Sultan Ahmet Mosque, also known as the Blue Mosque for its 21,000 blue Iznik tiles; the famous St. Sophia, once the largest church of the Christian world; and Topkapi Palace, the official residence of the Ottoman Sultans and home to treasures that include Spoonmaker's Diamond, one of the biggest in the world. Also visit the Grand Bazaar, with its 4,000 shops. Some tours bring you back to the ship for lunch while others include lunch in a first-class restaurant. (Shorter tours are also available that include some, but not all, of the above.)

THE TOP ATTRACTIONS

Topkapi Palace Topkapi Palace served as the residence of sultans from the 15th century to the mid–19th century. The Ottoman complex includes the


Istanbul
TURKEY
Dolmabache Palace 2
Grand Bazaar 4
Hagia Sophia (St. Sophia) 7
The Hippodrome 5
The Misir Carsisi (spice bazaar) 3
Nisantasi district 1
Sili district 1
Sultan Ahmet Mosque (Blue Mosque) 6
Taksim district 1
Topkapi Palace 8
1 2
ISTANBUL
Area of detail
3
Eminönü Square
EMİNÖNÜ
Sirkeci Train Station
Kennedy Caddesi
Resadiye Caddesi
Tahtakale Caddesi
Hamidiye Caddesi
Firinilar Yok
Pehlevi Caddesi
Asir Efendi Caddesi
Ankara Caddesi
Orhaniye Caddesi
GÜLHANE PARKI
CAĞALOĞLU
Ebussuut Caddesi
Tatja Hatun Caddesi
Vezir Han Caddesi
Türkocağı Caddesi
Hükümet Konağı Sokak
Alemdar Caddesi
Nuruosmaniiye Caddesi
Babıâli Caddesi
Yerebatan Caddesi
Çatalçeşme Sokak
Yenicçeriler Caddesi
Divan Yolu Caddesi
Alemdar Caddesi
Bab-ı Hümayun Caddesi
Ishak Paşa Caddesi
Kennedy Caddesi
Piyerloti Caddesi
İmran Öktem Caddesi
Mimar Mehmet Kabasakal Caddesi
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Sultan Ahmet Square
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Tips Museum Closings

Most museums are closed on Mondays, except Topkapi Palace, which is closed on Tuesdays.

chamber of the Sacred Mantle, harem quarters, crown jewels, holy relics, the throne room, and other treasures. From the verandas of the palace, guests get panoramic views of the city. In the summer it's wise to get a ticket to the harem tour after arriving at the palace. Tours are conducted every half-hour.

Kennedy Cad. Sultanahmet. ✆ **212/512-0480.** Admission $6; the guided harem tour costs $3. Wed–Mon 9am–5pm.

St. Sophia The 6th-century basilica is famous for its gigantic domes and magnificent mosaics. St. Sophia was commissioned by Emperor Justinian, who was looking to restore the greatness of the Roman empire. It was later converted to a mosque by the Ottomans. Also known as the Church of the Divine Wisdom, Hagia Sophia is regarded as one of the best examples of Byzantine architecture.

Yerebatan Cad. Sultanahmet. ✆ **212/522-1750.** Admission $4.70. Tues–Sun 9am–5pm.

The Blue Mosque Also known as the Imperial Sultanahmet Mosque, the mosque was built in the 17th century and features dazzling blue and white Iznik tiles and six minarets. Guests must remove their shoes and leave them at the entrance.

Free admission. Daily 9am–6pm.

Hippodrome This park was once the site of great chariot races and Byzantine civic life. What remains from those times are three monuments, the Obelisk of Theodosius, the bronze serpentine column, and the column of Constantine. Nearby is the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts.

Sultanahmet (in front of the Blue Mosque).

Dolmabache Palace The 19th-century palace is sometimes referred to as the Ottoman Versailles because of its extravagant pieces, such as a 4-ton Baccarat chandelier that was a gift from Queen Victoria. The palace boasts a mix of architectural designs, including European, Hindu, and Turkish elements.

Dolmabache Cad. ✆ **212/236-9000.** Admission and guided tour of the Sultan's Quarters $4; admission and guided tour of harem $4; combined ticket $7. Tues–Wed and Fri–Sun 9am–4pm. Camera fee $3.50; video-camera fee $7.

Grand Bazaar The Kapali Carsi (Grand Bazaar) contains 4,000 vendors selling carpets, leather goods, jewelry, antique reproductions, and other items. The oldest part of the market is Cevahir Bedesteni, which specializes in gold and silver works. To help you find your way around, maps are on sale at newsstands for $5.

Yeniceriler Cad and Fuatpasa Cad. Free admission. Mon–Sat 8:30am–7pm.

LOCAL FLAVORS

Turkish meals generally start with *meze* (hors d'oeuvres). Main courses usually feature fish, beef, and lamb dishes. One of the most popular items here is the kebab (either lamb or beef, skewered and grilled on a spit). The most common dessert is fresh fruit. The national drink is *raki,* which is flavored with anise. For

a meal fit for a sultan, try **Asitane,** in the Kariye Oteli, Kariye Camii Sok 18 (adjacent to the Church of St. Savoir in Chora; ✆ **212/534-8414**), where meals are prepared using historical recipes from Topkapi Palace. Reservations are suggested. Main courses run $5 to $19.

BEST BUYS

Shop here for carpets and kilims, onyx, leather goods, meerschaum pipes, and jewelry—and be ready to bargain. While browsing or bargaining, a shopkeeper may offer a cup of tea or a cold drink. This is part of the Turkish hospitality, so don't feel obliged to make a purchase. Bargaining is a serious business here, and it is considered bad form to start bargaining if you are not serious about buying the item.

Istanbul's legendary Grand Bazaar (see above) boasts 4,000 shops selling everything from copperware to carpets to cologne. Tucked in the bazaar's narrow alleys and passageways are cafes and restaurants.

The **Taksim, Nisantasi,** and **Sili** districts boast the most fashionable shops. Flea markets are open daily in the Topkapi district. The Misir Carsisi or **spice bazaar** is located next to Yeni Mosque at Eminouno.

KUŞADASI

Once a sleepy port town, Kuşadasi (which means "bird island" in Turkish) has become a bustling seaside resort. The city is used as a starting-off point for excursions to archaeological sites in Ephesus, Priene, Didyma, and Miletus as well as trips to beaches and Dilek National Park. ***Note:*** If possible, explore Kuşadasi's sights early in the day, before the sun is at its strongest.

FROMMER'S FAVORITE KUŞADASI EXPERIENCES

- **Visiting Ephesus.** An excursion to one of the best-preserved ancient cities in the world is a must.
- **Shopping.** As you wander through the streets, shopkeepers will try to lure you into their stores by promising you the best deal. It's fun to peruse, bargain, and buy, whether it is a small trinket or an expensive carpet.

COMING ASHORE & GETTING AROUND Ships dock right downtown. Stores and restaurants are within walking distance of the harbor. **Minibuses** (available from the town center) and **taxis** (yellow and metered) can take you to attractions and the beach.

THE BEST SHORE EXCURSIONS

Ephesus (3–4 hr.; $40–$44): Visit one of the best preserved ancient cities in the world. Your guide will take you down the city's actual marble streets to the Baths, the theater, and the incredible library building, and along the way you will pass columns, mosaics, monuments, and ruins. The tour may include a stop at a shop for a demonstration on Turkish carpets—with the emphasis on getting you to buy.

Ephesus & The House of The Virgin Mary (3½–4½ hr.; $44–$52): This tour combines a visit to Ephesus with the House of the Virgin Mary, a humble chapel located in the valley of Bulbuldagi, on the spot where the Virgin Mary is believed to have spent her last days. The site was officially sanctioned for pilgrimage in 1892.

Ephesus, St. John's Basilica & House of the Virgin Mary (4½ hr.; $56): This tour combines the two tours above with a visit to St. John's Basilica, another holy pilgrimage site. It is believed to be the site where St. John wrote the fourth book

of the New Testament. A church at the site, which is now in ruins, was built by Justinian over a 2nd-century tomb believed to contain St. John the apostle. This tour may also be offered as a full-day excursion, including lunch at a local restaurant, and a visit to the museum of Ephesus (7½ hr.; $72–$98).

Three Ancient Cities (6–7 hr.; $68–$89): This tour takes in the ruins that surround the region of Ephesus, including Priene, known for its Athena Temple (bankrolled by Alexander the Great); Didyma, known for the Temple of Apollo; and Miletus, which includes a stadium built by the Greeks and expanded by the Romans to hold 15,000 spectators. A light lunch at a restaurant in Didyma is included.

THE TOP ATTRACTIONS

Basilica of St. John & the House of the Virgin Mary It's said that the grave of St. John the Divine is located under the ruins of the church, which was one of the largest Byzantine churches in Turkey. In addition, Mary is thought to have spent her last days in a house on a nearby hillside. Today, the house is a church, with the main altar where the kitchen was located.

8km (5 miles) southwest of Selçuk. Admission to the park and house $2.10. Dawn to dusk.

Ephesus The city of Ephesus was built in the 11th century B.C. by the Ionians. The region thrived as a powerful trading port until silt accumulation over the course of centuries destroyed its harbor. Today, what remains of the city (and there's an amazing amount that remains) lies 4.8km (3 miles) from the sea. During its heyday, Ephesus also served as a center of worship. Its Temple of Diana was considered one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. When touring the site (and we recommend you see Ephesus on a shore excursion, with a licensed guide, as you'll get more out of the experience), visitors walk down a street paved in marble to agoras, a theater, public toilets (a real must-see!), and Ephesus's most striking monument, the two-story Celsus Library. Temples, baths, columns, and a 25,000-seat amphitheater—which is still used today for concerts and other theatrical productions—are among the other attractions. ***Note:*** Ephesus is about 21km (13 miles) from Kuşadasi, and you are best off visiting on a shore excursion with a professional guide. But if you are on your own, hire a guide at the site (shop around for the price that suits you).

✆ **232/892-6402.** Admission $5 adults. Summer daily 8am–6:30pm; winter daily 8:30am–4:30pm.

Kadinlar Denizi Kuşadasi's most popular beach also goes by the name of Ladies Beach. The small stretch attracts a large crowd.

About 8km (5 miles) from the port, via taxi.

LOCAL FLAVORS

During the summer, restaurant prices tend to climb. The best place to eat is along the waterfront, where many establishments offer great views. Seafood dishes are particularly good in this area as well as fresh fruits like apricots, cherries, and figs.

BEST BUYS

There are plenty of places to shop and haggle both in town and immediately outside Ephesus. You will find Turkish carpets, brass, leather goods, copper, jewelry, meerschaum pipes, and onyx. Prices are generally bumped up when cruise ships are in port. It is a common practice for shopkeepers to offer tea or soft drinks to customers, so don't feel obligated to make a purchase.

Kuşadasi/Ephesus Region



12

Ports of Call in Northern Europe & the British Isles

A northern European cruise is a different animal than a Mediterranean cruise, offering you the opportunity to explore the stunning fjords of Scandinavia; the windswept shores of the British Isles; historic port cities like Amsterdam, Copenhagen, and Stockholm; and even such lovely capital cities as London, Paris, and Berlin, accessible via shore excursions from the nearest ports. Some itineraries will also visit cities like St. Petersburg, Russia, with its czarist treasures; and Tallinn, in the former Soviet bloc country of Estonia, where you can see firsthand a country attempting to modernize while also preserving tradition.

All the big cities offer history, museums (including some of the best art museums in the world), and great shopping and dining opportunities. If it's scenery you're after, you'll find it in droves, especially in Norway, the land of the midnight sun, whose fjords are unbelievably gorgeous and where, on some itineraries, you can even go all the way up to the Arctic Sea.

1 Belgium

The medieval city of **Antwerp** is the world's fifth largest port and comes complete with all the liveliness, sophistication, and occasional seediness you would expect to find around any large harbor. Coming into Antwerp, ships cruise the Scheldt River from the North Sea, a distance of about 97km (60 miles), passing a 19km (12-mile) long stretch of port activity.

Shoppers will know Antwerp is the "Diamond Center of the World"—it's the leading market for cut diamonds and second only to London for raw and industrial diamonds. A visit to a diamond factory is an obligatory tourist attraction. Antwerp also offers a fine arts museum with Flemish masterpieces—the city was the hometown of Rubens and other famous artists—a stunning cathedral, and a maze of medieval streets to explore.

The cruise lines use Antwerp as a starting-off point for shore excursions into Brussels, about 48km (30 miles) away; Bruges, about 105km (65 miles) away; and Ghent, about 50km (31 miles) away.

CURRENCY As of March 2002, Belgium switched entirely to the euro (€) for its currency. One euro is made up of 100 euro cents. The exchange rate at press time was $1 = .87€.

LANGUAGE The official languages are French, Dutch, and (in one small area of eastern Belgium) German. Many Belgians speak English.





Cathedral of Our Lady **5**
De Keyserlei **10**
Diamondland **12**
The Diamond Quarter **12**
Druon and Brabo Fountain **3**
Flea Market **7**
Groenplaats **6**
The Grote Markt **3**
Leopoldstraat **13**
The Meir **9**
Minderbroedersrui **1**
Royal Museum of Fine Arts **14**
Rubens House **11**
St. Jacobskerk (St. Jame's Church) **8**
Stadhuis (Town Hall) **4**
Steen Castle **2**

FROMMER'S FAVORITE ANTWERP EXPERIENCES

- **Eating Belgian chocolate.** Favorite handmade brands include Wittamer, Nihoul, Godiva, Leonidas, and Neuhaus.
- **Visiting a diamond factory.** The cutters in the Diamond Quarter are renowned worldwide for their skills.
- **Exploring Antwerp's medieval town center.** This is the most colorful part of the city, and the warren of winding streets fans out from the Grote Markt, a lively 16th-century square right near the ship pier.

COMING ASHORE & GETTING AROUND It's about a 5-minute walk to the city center from the pier. **Taxis** cannot be hailed on the street but can be found at stands throughout the city. Antwerp also has a user-friendly network of **trams.** A single fare is about 1.50€ ($1.75); a one-day pass is 3.60€ ($4.15).

THE BEST SHORE EXCURSIONS

Antwerp City Tour (3½-4 hr.; $46–$64): Take a 15-minute bus ride to the pedestrian center of the city for a guided walking tour through the old town section and Grote Markt, including Town Hall, the gabled guild houses, cafes, and more. Visit the Vlaaikensgang alley, Our Lady's Cathedral, and Groenplaats, to see the statue of Rubens. Back in the bus, stop outside the house where Rubens lived. Visit Diamondland, a showroom where you can see diamond cutters do their thing and buy a special souvenir.

Brussels Sightseeing (4½-5½ hr.; $50–$57): About an hour's bus ride takes you to Belgium's capital city, visiting Heysel Stadium and the site of the 1958 World's Fair. Walk through the city's historic center to see the St. Hubert Gallery, the world-famous Grand Place with its decorated guild houses, and the statue of the little Manneken Pis, which is exactly what you think it is (who says this translation business is difficult?). Shopping time at Grand Place is included. Also pass by the Royal Palace, the Court House, and the European parliament, as well as the NATO headquarters building. If you want to tour Brussels on your own, you can get a bus transfer through the cruise lines for about 55€ ($63).

Bruges (8½ hr.; $98–$127): After about a 2-hour bus ride from Antwerp, you will walk with a guide along the cobbled streets of this city's beautiful historic section. See the Town Hall, the Chapel of the Holy Blood, and the Market Place with its guild houses and belfry tower. At the boat dock, take a 30-minute trip on the canals for the best view of this medieval city. You'll have some free time to shop at the chocolate and lace shops at Market Place. Tour includes lunch.

Medieval Ghent & Belgian Chocolate (4 hr.; $67): Take a guided walk through this historic city, visiting St. Nicholas Church, St. Bavo's Cathedral, and

A Girl's Best Friend

There are more than 12,000 expert diamond cutters and polishers at work in Antwerp's Diamond Quarter. Most belong to the Orthodox Jewish community that has traditionally handled the trade. To learn about the process, stop in at **Diamondland,** Appelmansstraat 33A (✆ **03/234-36-12**), which offers a guided tour and glittering souvenirs that you can buy to take home (at prices considerably lower than you will pay elsewhere). The workrooms are open Monday through Saturday, from 9am to 6pm. Admission is free.

The Legend of Druon & Brabo

The fountain in the center of Antwerp's Grote Markt recalls the legend of Druon and Brabo. According to the story, there was an evil giant named Druon who cut off the head of any Scheldt River boatman who refused to pay him a pricey toll. Brabo, a Roman centurion, eventually slew Druon and tossed his hand into the river. The Flemish word *handwerpen* (throwing of the hand) is where the name Antwerp derives from (or at least that's what they say).

the Belfry Tower, a 14th-century belfry with a 54-bell carillon, located across from St. Bavo's. Learn the fine art of making chocolates through a video presentation and a visit to a Belgian chocolate factory.

ANTWERP'S TOP ATTRACTIONS

Cathedral of Our Lady This magnificent church was begun in 1352. The architecture includes seven naves and 125 pillars, making it the largest church in Belgium. In addition to a splendid interior architecture, the cathedral houses three Rubens masterpieces: *Raising the Cross, The Descent From the Cross,* and *The Resurrection.* There's also an impressive stained-glass window by Rombout, dating from 1503.

Handschoenmarkt. ✆ **03/213-99-40.** Admission 2€ ($2.30), 1.50€ ($1.75) children and seniors. Mon–Fri 10am–5pm; Sat 10am–3pm; Sun 1–4pm.

Royal Museum of Fine Arts This neoclassical building houses a collection of works by Flemish masters (Rubens included) that is second to none, as well as paintings by more modern artists.

Leopold de Waelsplaats 2. ✆ **03/238-78-09.** Admission 5€ ($5.75) adults, 4€ ($4.60) children, students, and seniors. Tues–Sun 10am–5pm.

Rubens House Rubens built this mansion in 1610 with the tidy fortune he amassed by selling his paintings (no starving artist, he). There are examples of his works throughout the house, as well as works by his contemporaries, some master painters in their own right.

Wapper 9–11. ✆ **03/232-47-51.** Admission 5€ ($5.75) adults, 2.50€ ($2.85) students. Tues–Sun 10am–5pm. Every Fri free admission for everyone.

Stadhuis (Town Hall) The town hall, which dominates the Grote Markt square, contains frescoes by Hendriks Leys, an important 19th-century painter; interesting murals; and, in the burgomaster's room, an impressive 16th-century fireplace.

Grote Markt. ✆ **03/221-13-33.** Guided tours 1€ ($1.15). Mon–Wed and Fri at 11am, 2pm, and 3pm.

Steen Castle Antwerp's oldest building is on the banks of the River Scheldt and dates back to the 13th century. The fortress houses the National Maritime Museum, which offers models of clipper ships and an extensive library on nautical subjects.

Steenplein1 ✆ **03/201-93-40.** Admission 4€ ($4.60) adults, 2€ ($2.30) students, children free. Tues–Sun 10am–4:45pm.

St. Jacobskerk (St. James's Church) Rubens is buried in this majestic church, and several of the painter's works are here, as well as some by Van Dyck (also an Antwerp native) and other prominent artists.

Lange Nieuwstraat 73. ✆ **03/232-10-32.** Admission 2€ ($2.30) adults, 1.50€ ($1.75) children. Apr–Oct Mon–Sat 2–5pm; Nov–Mar Mon–Sat 9am–noon.

LOCAL FLAVORS

Belgian cuisine is much like French (some people actually like it better). Mussels and eel are specialties; other favorite dishes include steak and french fries, *tomates aux crevettes* (tomatoes stuffed with tiny shrimp and homemade mayonnaise), and Belgian endive (known here as *witloof*). Wash it all down with Belgian beer. There are some 400 brands, but we particularly like the dark, monk-brewed Trappist ales. Trendy bars and restaurants (and art galleries, too) can be found south of the town center, around Vlaamsekaai and Waalsekaai streets.

BEST BUYS

Shop here for high fashion, lace, chocolate, Belgian beer, and diamonds. Expensive shops, boutiques, and department stores can be found on De Keyserlei and the Meir. For haute couture try Leopoldstraat; for lace, the streets surrounding the cathedral; for antiques, Minderbroedersrui; and for diamonds, Applemansstraat and other streets near Centraal Station. Bargain-hunters should head to the Flea Market, held on Wednesday and Friday mornings on Vrijfdagmarkt, facing the Plantin-Morteus Museum, especially for deals on household goods.

2 Denmark

The Royal City of **Copenhagen** was founded in 1167 and is the capital of the oldest kingdom in the world. It's also the largest city in Scandinavia, with a population of more than 1.5 million. Here visitors enjoy the blend of history and culture, lots of green city parks, and much charm, reflected both in its friendly, fun-loving people as in its antique architecture.

This is a lively city where people like to have fun, especially at **Tivoli Gardens,** an extraordinary amusement park that's a must-visit attraction. In the summer, Copenhageners come outdoors (the winters are long), and that means lots of **outdoor cafes,** and people sunbathing (sometimes topless) in the city's parks.

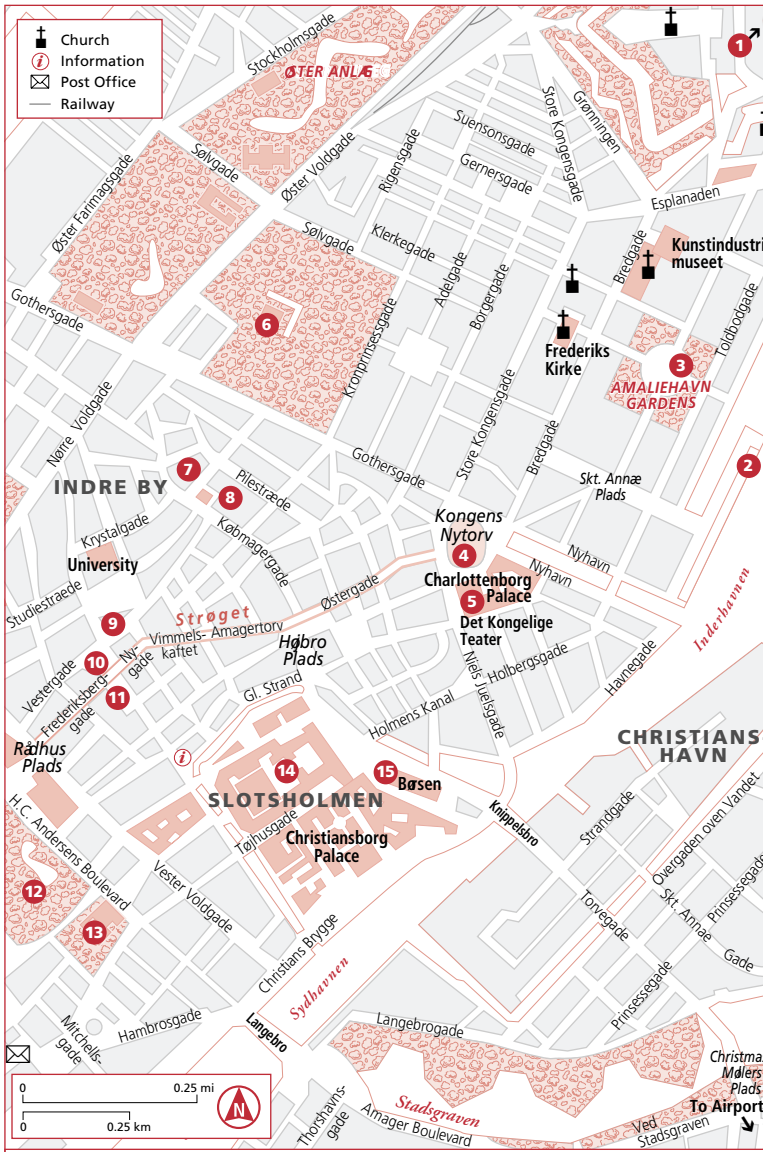
The city's most famous resident was Hans Christian Andersen, whose memory still lives on here. All visitors seem to want to see **The Little Mermaid statue.** It's considered an almost obligatory stop.

You can easily cover Old Copenhagen, with its narrow cobbled streets and old houses, on foot. Especially pedestrian-friendly is the Strøget, Europe's longest and oldest walking street.

The name Copenhagen comes from the word *københavn,* meaning "merchants' harbor," and this is a city where you're often on the water, be it the sea or canals. The cruise pier is just a few minutes away from the city center. The entrance to the city through The Sound (the Øresund) that separates Denmark and Sweden is worth a view.

CURRENCY The Danish krone (crown), or kroner in its plural form, is made up of 100 øre. The international monetary designation for the Danish kroner is DKK. Banknotes are issued in 50, 100, 500, and 1,000 Kr. The rate of exchange at press time was $1 = 6.48DKK.

LANGUAGE Danish. English is commonly spoken, especially by young people.





Amalienborg Palace **3**
Christiansborg Palace **14**
Copenhagen Cathedral **9**
Danish Royal Theater **5**
The Gammeltorv **10**
Illum's Department Store **11**
The Little Mermaid statue **1**
Magasin Department Store **4**
Museum Erotica **7**
Ny Carlsberg Glypotek Art Museum **13**
Nyhavn (New Harbor) **2**
Rosenborg castle **6**
The Round Tower **8**
Stock Exchange **15**
Strøget (Pedestrian Street) **11**
Tivoli Gardens **12**

FROMMER'S FAVORITE COPENHAGEN EXPERIENCES

- **Spending a day (and a night, too) at Tivoli.** These 150-year-old gardens offer a unique brand of fun.
- **Strolling the Strøget.** Europe's oldest and longest pedestrian street is a shopper's paradise.
- **Sitting at an outdoor cafe.** Have a beer and watch the scenery. The best spot is at Nyhavn (New Harbor), beginning at Kongens Nytorv, where the scenery includes tall ships.
- **Visiting Helsingør (Elsinore) and the Kronborg Castle.** "To be, or not to be. . . ." Shakespeare set his *Hamlet* here.
- **Taking a barge ride along Nyhavn Canal.** The comfortable little craft leave from right in the heart of town and pass much of historic Copenhagen in less than 2 hours.

COMING ASHORE & GETTING AROUND It's about a 20-minute walk from the pier to the city center. **Taxis** are available at the pier. Make sure the cab is metered. Tips are included in the metered rate, which begins at about 23DKK ($3.55) and adds about 10DKK ($1.55) for each kilometer thereafter. Reduced rates weekday nights and weekends. The city also has an excellent **bus** system. It is easy to get from Copenhagen to sights in North Zealand by **train.**

THE BEST SHORE EXCURSIONS

City Tour (3 hr.; $39–$59): Visit Christiansborg, the seat of Denmark's government since 1918, and Christiansborg Palace. Drive past the Stock Exchange with its stunning spire of entwining dragons' tails, built by King Christian IV; the Danish Royal Theater, home of the Royal Ballet Troupe, built in 1824; and Nyhavn, the one-time sailor's district. Stop briefly outside the Amalienborg Palace to photograph the Queen's guards. Then check out the Little Mermaid statue. You'll also pass Tivoli Gardens, the Glyptotek Art Museum, the Round Tower, Copenhagen Cathedral, and the Gammeltorv, a marketplace and the oldest part of the city.

Copenhagen's Royal Palaces (4 hr.; $55–$62): This tour includes Rosenborg castle, home of the Danish crown jewels; and Christiansborg Palace, a massive 12th-century fortress surrounded by canals on three sides; followed by a brief city tour.

North Zealand & Helsingør (7 hr.; $100–$135): After a brief city tour of Copenhagen, travel by bus through the Danish countryside to Frederiksborg Castle in Hillerod. This magnificent Renaissance castle is now the National Museum of History. In the small chapel, you will find the oldest organ in the world, still in use today. Next stop is the Fredensborg Palace, summer residence of the Royal Family. Continue north to the town of Helsingør (Elsinore) where you'll explore the courtyard and ramparts of Kronborg Castle, which dates back to the 16th century. The castle is better known as Hamlet's Castle, immortalized when Shakespeare chose it as the setting for his play (even though Hamlet would have lived long before the castle was built). Return to Copenhagen along the coast, known as the Danish Riviera. Lunch featuring Danish specialties is included.

Copenhagen by Bike (3 hr.; $57): Do as the locals do and travel around the city by bike. Cycle with a guide past the harborfront and yacht marina. Stop to see the Little Mermaid. View the Queen's Amalienborg Palace. Continue to the Nyhaven canals. See the outside of the Royal Theatre and Rosenborg Castle with

its verdant park grounds. Pass Nyboder, a historic neighborhood of yellow row houses built for members of the Royal Navy in the 1630s; it's still occupied by military families. The bikes have handbrakes, and the ride covers about 7.3km (4½ miles).

THE TOP ATTRACTIONS

Christiansborg Palace The queen officially receives guests in the Royal Reception Chamber at the palace, located on the island of Slotsholmen (you go over a bridge to get there). Housing the Parliament House and the Supreme Court, the baroque structure is impressive, even by European standards, and you can tour the richly decorated rooms, including the Throne Room, Queen's Library, and banqueting hall. Before entering, you'll be asked to put on slippers to protect the floors. Under the palace, you can visit the well-preserved ruins of the 1167 castle of Bishop Absalon, the founder of Copenhagen.

Christiansborg Slotsplads, Prins Jørgens Gård 1. ✆ **33/92-64-92.** Admission to the Royal Reception Rooms 40DKK ($4.85) adults, 10DKK ($1.25) children; free admission to parliament; castle ruins 45DKK ($6.95) adults, 35DKK ($5.40) seniors and students, 10DKK ($1.25) children. Reception rooms guided tours given May to late Sept daily at 11am, 1pm (Jul and Aug only), and 3pm; Jan–Apr Tues–Sun at 3pm.

Kronberg Slot This is the castle that Shakespeare made famous in *Hamlet* (although Shakespeare never actually visited here). The 16th-century Renaissance castle includes a Great Hall that is one of the largest in Europe. A new exhibit gives the history of plays performed at the castle, explains how the venue came to inspire Shakespeare, and describes the performances of various actors who have taken on the difficult Hamlet role. The castle's church with its original oak furnishings is also worth a peek.

Note: It is very easy to combine a trip to the Louisiana Museum and Helsingør. Buy a day ticket at the central station in Copenhagen, stop at the art museum, and then reboard the train for the 10-minute ride to Helsingør (from where you can catch the train back to Copenhagen).

In Helsingør (Elsinore), about 40km (25 miles) north of Copenhagen, or an hour by train. ✆ **49-21-30-78.** Admission 40DKK ($6.20) adults, 15DKK ($2.30) children, free for children under 6. May–Sept Mon–Sun 10:30am–5pm; Oct Tues–Sun 11am–4pm; Nov–Dec Tues–Sun 11am–3pm.

The Little Mermaid (Den Lille Havfrue) Every visitor to Copenhagen wants to see the life-size bronze statue of the character from Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale of the same name. Unveiled in 1913, it has been attacked several times over the years, losing an arm in one misadventure, and getting beheaded in another. The statue is located no more than a 10-minute walk from the cruise ship docks, set on rocks right offshore.

Langelinie, on the harbor.

Louisiana Museum of Modern Art A favorite of ours (and also the most popular museum in Denmark), Louisiana offers a collection that includes Giacometti and Henry Moore, located in an idyllic setting on the Danish Riviera. The museum is located about 32km (20 miles) north of Copenhagen and is easily accessible by trains on the Copenhagen-Helsingør line, which depart every half-hour. From the train stop in Humlebæk it's about a 10- or 15-minute walk (the direction is well marked), or take a shuttle bus.

About a 40-min. train ride outside the city. ✆ **49/19-07-19.** Admission 72DKK ($11) adults, 65DKK ($10) students and seniors, 20DKK ($3) children 4–16, free for children under 4. Thurs–Tues 10am–5pm; Wed 10am–10pm.

Museum of S-e-x

For a little something different, visit the Museum Erotica, the only museum in the world where you can learn about the sex lives of such luminaries as Freud, Nietzsche, and even Duke Ellington. The collection surveys erotica through the ages, and includes Etruscan drawings, Chinese paintings, and Greek vases, all depicting sexual activity. The museum is within walking distance of Tivoli, at Købmagergade 24. ✆ **33/12-03-11.** Admission is 70DKK ($11). May to September, daily 10am to 11pm.

Ny Carlsberg Glypotek Located near Tivoli Gardens, the Glypotek was founded in the 19th century by Carl Jacobsen, who also started the Carlsberg Brewing Company. It is one of Scandinavia's most important museums. The collection includes French and Danish art, mostly from the 19th century. Sculptures by Rodin can be found on the ground floor, and works of the Impressionists, including van Gogh's *Landscape from St. Rémy,* on the upper floors. There are also Greek, Roman, Etruscan, and Egyptian collections.

Dantes Plads 7. ✆ **33/41-81-41.** Admission 30DKK ($4.65) adults, free for children under 16. Free admission for everyone Wed and Sun. Tues–Sun 10am–4pm.

Rosenborg Castle Built in 1607 by King Christian IV as a summer residence, the red-brick Renaissance castle was converted into a museum in the 19th century. It houses the Danish crown jewels, costumes, and other impressive royal memorabilia.

Øster Voldgade 4A. ✆ **33/15-32-86.** Admission 60DKK ($9.25) adults, 40DKK ($6.20) children under 15. June–Aug daily 10am–4pm; May and Sept to mid-Oct daily 11am–3pm; mid-Oct to Apr Tues–Sun 11am–2pm.

Tivoli Gardens Since it opened in 1843, this garden and amusement park has been a must-do in Copenhagen. The garden offers thousands of flowers, and the fun includes a merry-go-round of tiny Viking ships, pinball arcades, slot machines, shooting galleries, bumper cars (populated at night mostly by businesspeople out for a night of fun), and a Ferris wheel of hot air balloons. There are more than two dozen restaurants located in an Arabian-style fantasy palace, and a lake with ducks, swans, and boats. Entertainment includes parades, regimental band concerts, and pantomime performances.

Vesterbrogade 3. ✆ **33/15-10-01.** Admission 60DKK ($9.20), 25DKK ($3.85) children. Ride tickets are 15DKK ($1.55), and you may need multiple tickets for a ride; all-day wristband, which allows unlimited access to rides, is about 190DKK ($30). Sun–Wed 11am–11pm; Thurs 11am–midnight; Fri 11am–1am; Sat 11am–midnight. Closed mid-Sept to Apr (except for Christmas market hours).

LOCAL FLAVORS

The favorite dish at lunch is *smørrebrød,* meaning open-faced sandwiches, and it's practically a national institution. Our favorite is piled with tiny Danish shrimp, but other popular favorites are sliced pork loin, roast beef, and liver paste. Wash the sandwiches down with Carlsberg or Tuborg (beer). For a good selection of restaurants including outdoor eateries, head to **Tivoli Gardens** or the **Nyhavn** harbor area.

BEST BUYS

Best shopping buys here include stainless steel items, porcelain, china, glassware, toys, textiles, and jewelry (decorative, silver, and semi-precious stones). The **Strøget** provides the most shopping opportunities. In addition to numerous boutiques, there are two main department stores, Illum's and Magasin.

3 England

London is the largest city in Europe and one of the best tourist cities in the world. Known for pageantry and tradition, the city offers numerous monuments to its elaborate past, but it's also a hip and lively city, very up on the latest fashion, food, and music trends, and culturally and economically diverse. There is something for everyone here—history, magnificent palaces, medieval churches, literary shrines, culture, nightlife, parks and gardens, great museums (more than 300 of them), the best theater scene in the world, and fabulous shopping (a stop at Harrods is obligatory).

It's difficult to see everything in this sprawling city, but pick a few neighborhoods and walk around. Get yourself by tube (subway, to Americans) to Trafalgar Square and walk in any direction from there. Pall Mall, Buckingham Palace, and St. James's Park lie to the southwest, while The Strand, Fleet Street, and St. Paul's Cathedral are to the northeast. Big Ben, Whitehall, 10 Downing Street, the Houses of Parliament, and Westminster Abbey are due south. Sightseeing from a double-decker bus is also a good choice. And the city's subway system (called the Underground) is very user-friendly and easy to negotiate, although it admittedly needs a major upgrade.

Take a picture of **Big Ben** (at the Houses of Parliament, Westminster Palace, Old Place Yard, SW1), and while you're in the neighborhood, check out **Westminster Abbey** and 10 Downing Street (home of the prime minister). **Buckingham Palace,** home to the queen, is now open in the summer. Even when the gates are closed, the spectacle of the Changing of the Guard is worth fighting the crowds for. And for something different, listen to the speeches at the **Speaker's Corner** in Hyde Park (anyone can stand up and speak here), down a pint at a traditional pub, eat some fish and chips wrapped in paper, and make sure to experience afternoon tea.

There are restaurants everywhere, and even some good ones—it may be time to stop picking on British cuisine!

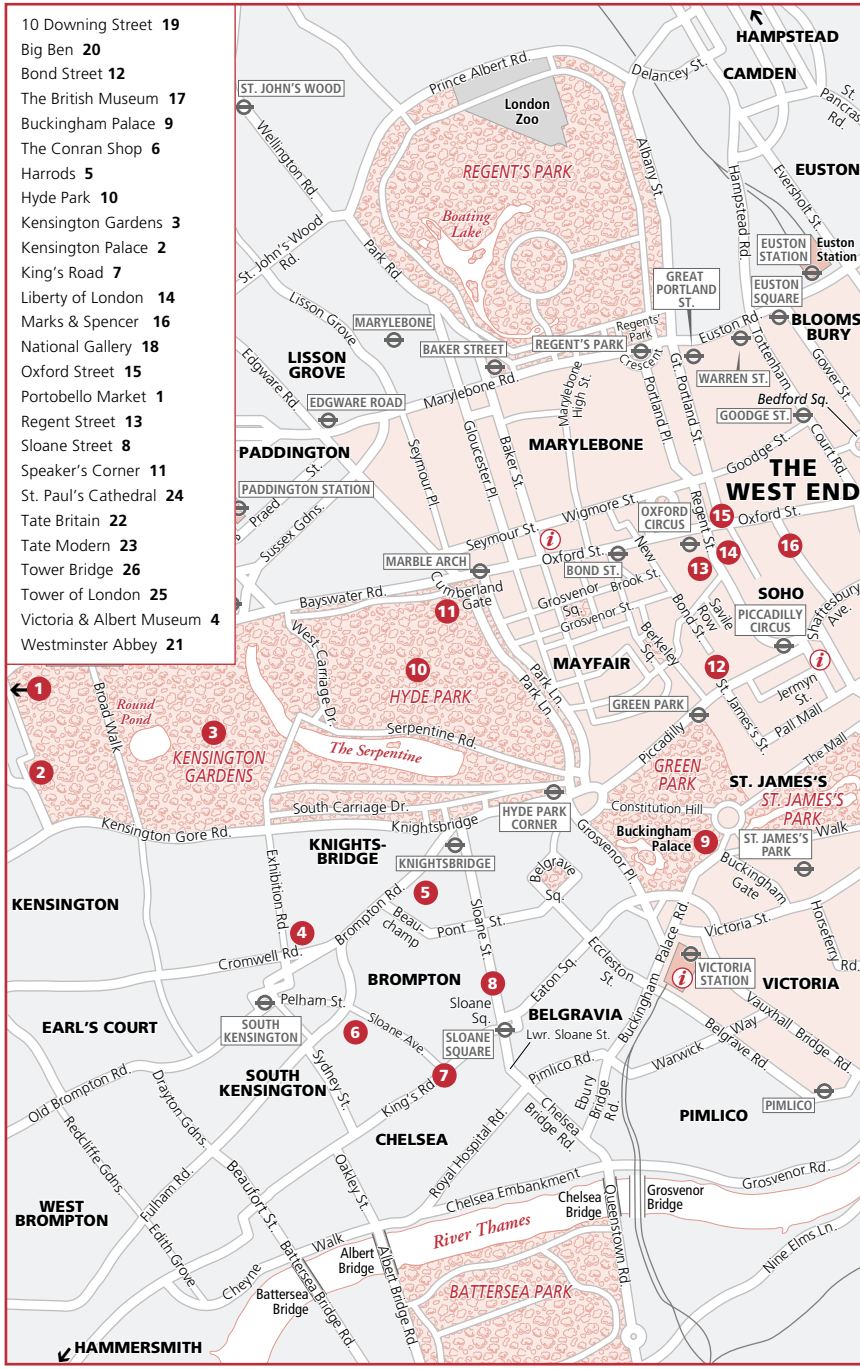
CURRENCY The British unit of currency is the pound sterling (£), which is divided into 100 pence. Banknotes are issued in 1, 5, 10, 20, and 50 pound denominations. The rate of exchange at press time was $1 = £.60.

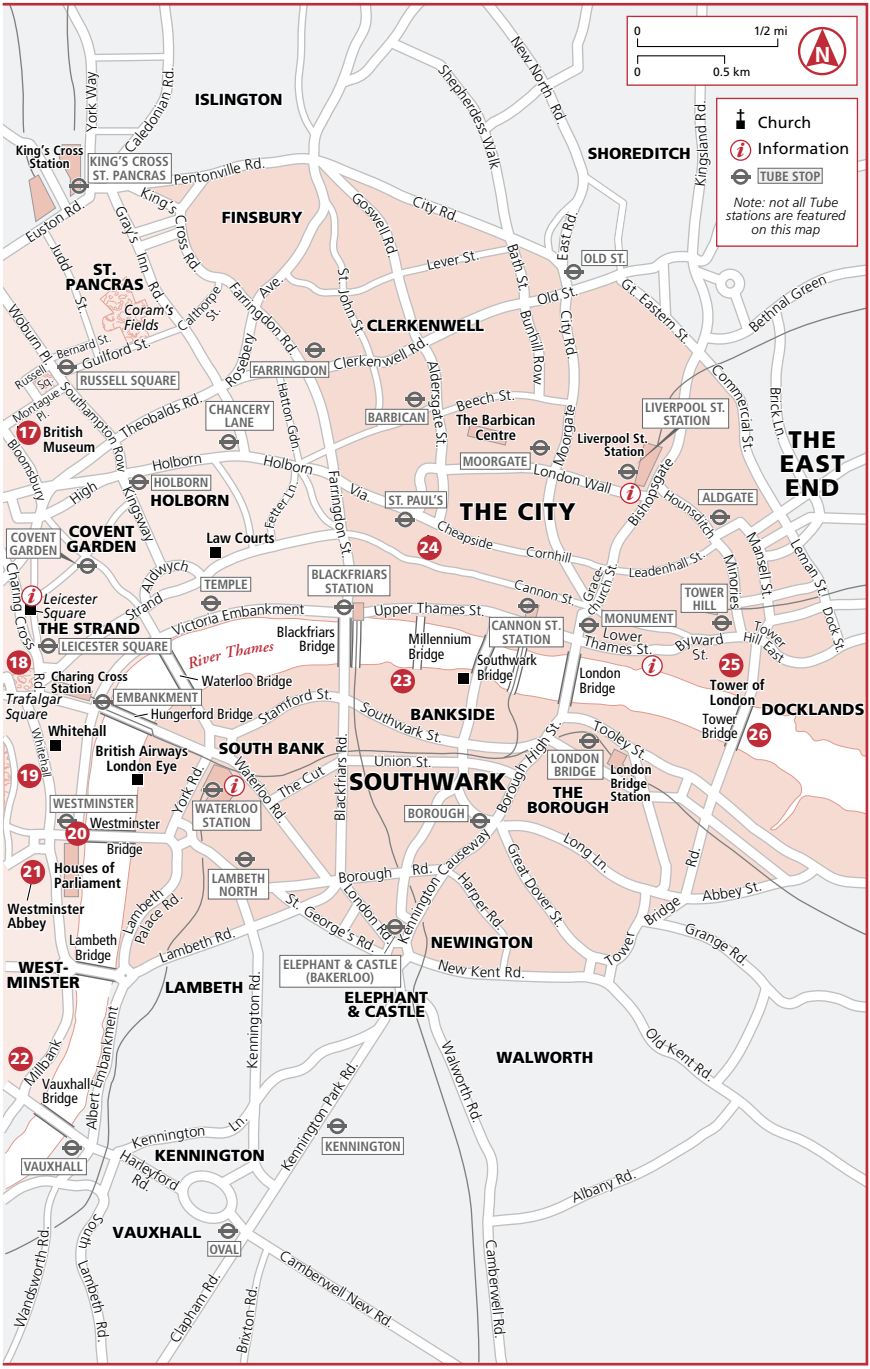
LANGUAGE English.

FROMMER'S FAVORITE LONDON EXPERIENCES

- **Enjoying a traditional tea.** If you've never experienced scones with clotted cream, now is your chance—they're heavenly!
- **Attending a play at a West End theater.** London is the theater capital of the world, with more plays produced here than anywhere else.
- **Museum-hopping.** You have hundreds to choose from, including the Tate, National Gallery, Victoria & Albert, and British Museum, and many offer free admission.
- **Visiting a pub.** The traditional ones in central London have long mahogany bars, dark-wood paneling, and Victorian accessories, and are a great place to meet the locals.
- **Going shopping at Harrods.** Harrods in Knightsbridge is spread across 6 hectares (15 acres) and proudly proclaims its motto *Omnia Omnibus Ubique* (or "everything for everyone"). Someone who didn't believe that claim in 1975 called the store at midnight and ordered a baby elephant to be sent to the home of the governor of California. The gift arrived safely, and Nancy Reagan sent a thank you note on behalf of herself and her husband, Ronald.

Central London




0 1/2 mi
0 0.5 km
N
Church
Information
TUBE STOP
Note: not all Tube stations are featured on this map
ISLINGTON
SHOREDITCH
FINSBURY
CLERKENWELL
THE CITY
THE EAST END
ST. PANCRAS
HOLBORN
COVENT GARDEN
THE STRAND
SOUTH BANK
BANKSIDE
SOUTHWARK
THE BOROUGH
NEWINGTON
LAMBETH
WEST-MINSTER
ELEPHANT & CASTLE
WALWORTH
KENNINGTON
VAUXHALL
DOCKLANDS
King's Cross Station
KING'S CROSS ST. PANCRAS
FARRINGDON
CHANCERY LANE
RUSSELL SQUARE
BARBICAN
MOORGATE
LIVERPOOL ST. STATION
ALDGATE
ST. PAUL'S
BLACKFRIARS STATION
TEMPLE
CANNON ST. STATION
MONUMENT
TOWER HILL
OLD ST.
LEICESTER SQUARE
EMBANKMENT
WATERLOO STATION
LONDON BRIDGE
BOROUGH
LAMBETH NORTH
ELEPHANT & CASTLE (BAKERLOO)
OVAL
Law Courts
Leicester Square
Charing Cross Station
Trafalgar Square
Whitehall
British Museum
British Airways London Eye
Houses of Parliament
Westminster Abbey
Westminster Bridge
Lambeth Bridge
Waterloo Bridge
Hungerford Bridge
Blackfriars Bridge
Millennium Bridge
Southwark Bridge
London Bridge
Tower Bridge
Tower of London
London Bridge Station
Vauxhall Bridge
The Barbican Centre
Liverpool St. Station
River Thames
Coram's Fields
Bethnal Green
Euston Rd.
Pentonville Rd.
City Rd.
Old St.
Gt. Eastern St.
Commercial St.
Brick Ln.
Shepherdess Walk
New North Rd.
Kingsland Rd.
Goswell Rd.
Lever St.
Bath St.
East Rd.
Farringdon Rd.
Clerkenwell Rd.
Aldersgate St.
Beech St.
Moorgate
London Wall
Bishopsgate
Houndsditch
Cheapside
Cornhill
Leadenhall St.
Minories
Mansell St.
Leman St.
Dock St.
Tower Hill East
Upper Thames St.
Lower Thames St.
Byward St.
Cannon St.
Gracechurch St.
Victoria Embankment
Stamford St.
Southwark St.
Union St.
Tooley St.
Borough High St.
Blackfriars Rd.
Waterloo Rd.
The Cut
York Rd.
Westminster Bridge Rd.
Lambeth Palace Rd.
Lambeth Rd.
Borough Rd.
Great Dover St.
Long Ln.
Abbey St.
Grange Rd.
Tower Bridge Rd.
New Kent Rd.
Old Kent Rd.
Albany Rd.
Camberwell New Rd.
Camberwell Rd.
Clapham Rd.
Brixton Rd.
Wandsworth Rd.
Kennington Rd.
Kennington Park Rd.
Kennington Ln.
Harleyford Rd.
Walworth Rd.
Millbank
Albert Embankment
Caledonian Rd.
York Way
Gray's Inn Rd.
King's Cross Rd.
Judd St.
Woburn Pl.
Bernard St.
Guilford St.
Russell Sq.
Montague Pl.
Southampton Row
Theobalds Rd.
Bloomsbury
High Holborn
Kingsway
Aldwych
Strand
Charing Cross Rd.
Whitehall
Farringdon St.
Fetter Ln.
Hatton Gdn.
Via
Rosebery Ave.
Calthorpe St.
St. John St.
Bunhill Row
City Rd.
Moorgate
Lamb's Conduit St.
Wobum Pl.
17
18
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24
25
26

COMING ASHORE & GETTING AROUND Some small ships, like those operated by Seabourn, Radisson Seven Seas, and Silversea, actually sail up the Thames and dock adjacent to Tower Bridge (opposite the Tower of London). That is a visual treat equal to sailing under San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge or into Sydney Harbor! Other ships dock at farther-out ports including Southampton, Dover, and Harwich, and bus passengers to London.

Getting around London is not difficult at all. There are **taxis** everywhere. There's also a great **Underground** (subway) system, referred to here as the "tube." Or you can ride on one of the famous red double-decker **buses.**

THE BEST SHORE EXCURSIONS

Our recommendation is for you to take the transfer to London offered by the cruise line and then go it on your own.

THE TOP ATTRACTIONS

The British Museum This museum houses one of the most comprehensive collections of art and artifacts in the world. It would take days to explore, so we suggest you start with the Asian, Chinese porcelain, Indian sculpture, Prehistoric, and Romano-British collections (on your first visit, anyway).

Great Russell St., WC1. ✆ **020/7323-8299** (or 020/7636-1555 for recorded message). Free admission. Sat–Wed 10am–5:30pm; Thurs–Fri 10am–8:30pm; Sun 2:30–6pm.

Buckingham Palace This massive yet graceful palace is the official residence of the queen. If Her Majesty is at home, the Royal Standard flag will be flying outside. When she is not at home, visitors are allowed to tour parts of the palace, including the state apartments, Throne Room, grand staircase, and picture galleries. The Changing of the Guard, the world's most famous military ritual, takes place in the palace's forecourt.

At the end of The Mall (the street running from Trafalgar Sq.). ✆ **020/7839-1377.** Palace tours, about £12 ($20) adults to age 60, £10 ($17) seniors, £6 ($9.95) children under 17. Free admission to Changing of the Guard. Tours Aug–Sept 9:30am–4:15pm, the months in which the Royal Family is not in residence. For tour hours check with your ship's shore excursions desk or consult the local tourist publications when you arrive in London. Do the same for the Changing of the Guard which, when it takes place, is offered daily Apr–July at 11:30am, and the rest of the year at 11am—a must-see spectacle.

National Gallery The neoclassical building itself is impressive, and the collection houses a comprehensive collection of Western paintings representing all the major schools from the 13th to the early 20th century.

On the north side of Trafalgar Square, WC2. ✆ **020/7747-2885.** Free admission. Thurs–Tues 10am–6pm; Wed 10am–9pm.

St. Paul's Cathedral After the great fire of 1666, the old St. Paul's was razed, and Christopher Wren designed this impressive structure with its massive classical dome. Inside are many monuments, including a memorial chapel to American service personnel who lost their lives during World War II. Wren lies in the crypt, as do the Duke of Wellington and Lord Nelson.

St. Paul's Churchyard, EC4. ✆ **020/7236-4128.** Cathedral £6 ($9.95) adults, £3 ($5) children 6–16. Galleries £2.50 ($4) adults, £2 ($3.20) students and seniors, £1 ($1.66) children. Guided tours £2.50 ($4.15), recorded tours £3.50 ($5.80), £1 ($1.66) children; free for children 5 and under. Mon–Sat 8:30am–4pm; galleries, Mon–Sat 9:30am–4pm. No sightseeing Sun (services only).

Tate Britain The national gallery of British art from the 1500s until today, Tate Britain boasts a collection of works by Constable, Blake, Gainsborough, Hogarth, Hockney, and many more.

Millbank, London (in the Lambeth area on the north side of the Thames, near Vauxhall Bridge). ✆ **020/7887-8000.** Free admission. Charge for special exhibitions. Daily 10am–5:30pm.

Tate Modern Opened in the Spring of 2000 in what was originally the Bankside Power Station, the magnificent Tate Modern is home to a collection of international art (1900 to the present) including works by Dalí, Picasso, and Warhol and more contemporary modern artists such as Susan Hiller and Dorothy George.

25 Summer St., Bankside (in the Southwark area, on the south side of the Thames, near Millennium Bridge). ✆ **020/7887-8008.** Free admission. Sun–Thurs 10am–6pm; Fri–Sat 10am–10pm.

Tower of London Exhibits at this ancient fortress include the Armouries, which date back to the time of Henry VIII (check out his suit of armor!); a display of instruments of torture recalling some of the more gruesome moments in the Tower's history; and the Jewel House, where the crown jewels are kept. Go early, as the Tower is extremely popular with Brits and tourists alike, and you're likely to encounter long lines.

Tower Hill (on the north bank of the Thames). ✆ **020/7709-0765.** Admission £12 ($20) adults, £8.85 ($15) students and seniors, £7.50 ($13) children, or £34 ($56) for a family ticket for 2 adults and 3 children, free for children under 5. Mar–Oct Mon–Sat 9am–5pm, Sun 10am–5pm; Nov–Feb Tues–Sat 9am–4pm, Sun and Mon 10am–4pm. Uniformed Yeoman Warders (also known as "Beefeaters") give 1-hr. tours at frequent intervals, starting at 9:30am from the Middle Tower near the main entrance. The tour includes the Chapel Royal of St. Peter ad Vincula (St. Peter in Chains). The last guided walk starts at about 3:30pm in summer, 2:30pm in winter.

Victoria and Albert Museum This museum features fine and decorative arts, including medieval items, Islamic carpets, and the largest Renaissance sculpture collection outside of Italy, including a Donatello marble relief.

Cromwell Rd., SW7. ✆ **020/7942-2000.** Admission £5 ($8.30) adults, £3 ($5) students and seniors, free for children under 18. Mon noon–5:30pm; Tues–Sun 10am–5:45pm.

Westminster Abbey An abbey was founded on this spot in 1065 by the Saxon king, Edward the Confessor. The first English king crowned in the abbey was Harold in 1066. William the Conqueror followed, and the coronation tradition has continued to the present day, broken only twice (Edward V and Edward VIII). Today's structure owes most to Henry VIII's plans, but many

Remembering Diana

A sea of flowers and other tributes were left at the beautiful Kensington Gardens (which adjoin Hyde Park at Kensington Palace) after the death of Princess Diana. Even today, mourners leave flowers at the gates of the palace, where Diana resided when she was in London.

The palace is open to visitors by guided tour from 10am to 5pm daily June through September, 10am to 4pm other months. Admission is £9 ($15) adults, £7 ($12) students and seniors, and £6.50 ($11) children, or buy a family package for £28 ($47) (✆ **020/7937-9561**). Princess Diana is buried on a picturesque island on the Oval Lake at Althorp, the Spencer family estate in Northamptonshire, about 121km (75 miles) from London. The grounds are open to visitors on a limited basis. Advance reservations are required. Call ✆ **01604/592-020.**

architects, including Christopher Wren, contributed. Noted spots include the shrine of Edward the Confessor (who was canonized in the 12th c.) and the Poet's Corner, where you'll find monuments to Chaucer, Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Samuel Johnson, the Brontë sisters, Thackeray, Dickens, Tennyson, Kipling, and even the American Longfellow.

Broad Sanctuary, SW1. ✆ **020/7654-4900.** Free admission to cloisters. Abbey, £6 ($10) adults, £3 ($5) students and seniors, free for children 11 and under, family ticket £12 ($19). Mon–Fri 9:30am–4:45pm; Sat 9am–2:45pm. On Sunday, the Royal Chapels are closed, but the rest of the church is open unless a service is being conducted. For times of services, phone the **Chapter Office** (✆ **020/7222-5152**).

LOCAL FLAVORS

You can find all the international favorites here—Indian is cheap and favored by locals—along with British specialties like **fish and chips,** which you can buy as takeout wrapped in paper—though, thanks to tougher health regulations, it's no longer yesterday's newspaper—and steak-and-kidney pie. Food is also served in pubs, where you can wash down your meal with a pint of ale.

If you want to experience **high tea,** head to a tea house or one of the better hotels. A traditional tea includes a choice of sandwiches and cakes, and scones with clotted cream.

BEST BUYS

You name it, you can buy it here, but there aren't many bargains to be found. You can find deals on some fashion items, British and Scottish woolens, and china. Food items make great gifts, especially English biscuits (cookies).

Major West End shopping streets include **Oxford Street** for affordable items (the flagship brand of the **Marks & Spencer** department store is here); **Regent Street** for more upscale shopping (including the famed **Liberty of London** department store, worth seeing even if you're not in a buying mood); and **Bond Street,** for luxury designer shopping.

In Knightsbridge, you'll find the world-famous **Harrods** department store and lots of other shopping opportunities as well, including designer shops on **Sloane Street.** Harrods is a must-do stop (check out, especially, the food hall on the lower levels).

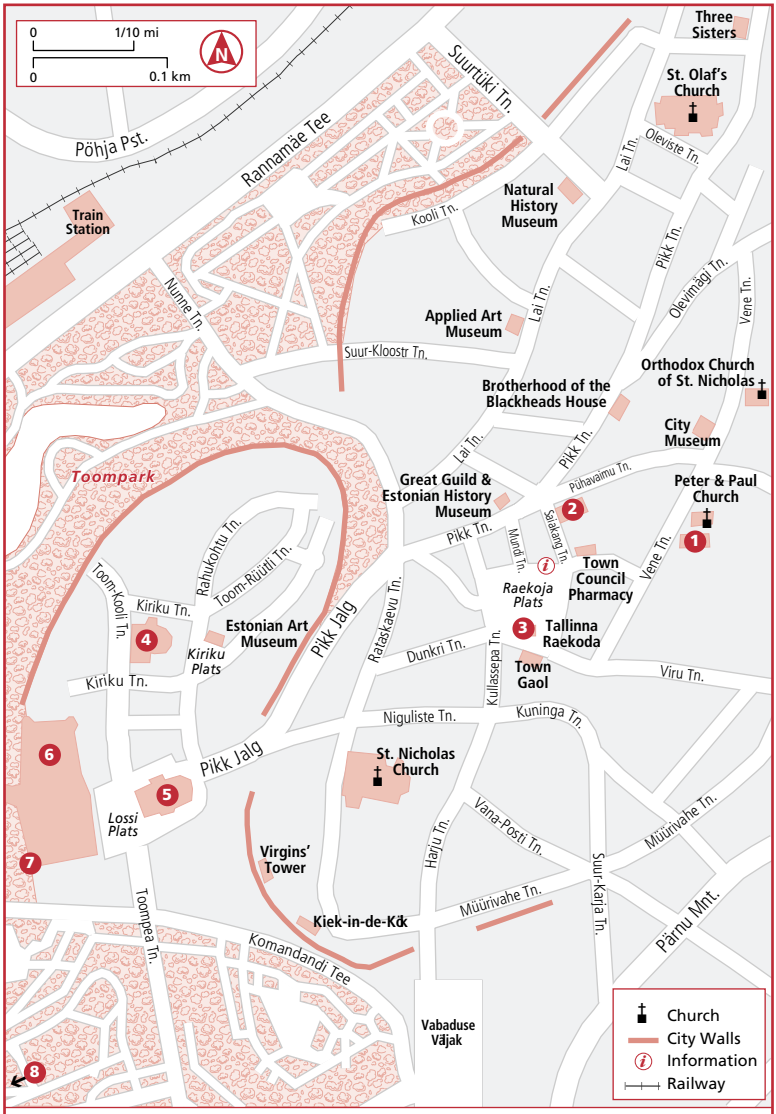
King's Road, the main street of Chelsea, was hip in the '60s, and even today is frequented by young people. Shops including The Conran Shop, which sells household goods, can be found nearby at **Brompton Cross.**

For a fun, typically London experience, head on Saturdays to the **Portobello Market** in Notting Hill. You'll find a little bit of everything for sale there, including antiques.

4 Estonia

Located on the Baltic Sea, only about 60km (37 miles) across the Gulf of Finland from Helsinki, Estonia spent 2 centuries as one of Russia's Baltic Provinces before becoming an independent republic in 1918. Little over 2 decades later, it fell back under Russian control when Soviet troops rolled in and incorporated the country into the Soviet Union. It became independent once again in 1991. Separated from the west for 50 years, the capital city of **Tallinn** is now visited frequently by tourists sailing aboard hydrofoils and other vessels from Helsinki and Stockholm.

The city, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, was founded in the 12th century. Over the years, it has been ruled by Denmark, Sweden, and Germany as well as



Alexander Nevsky Cathedral **5**
Dome Church (St. Mary's) **4**
Dominican Monastery **1**
Estonia Open Air Museum **8**
Holy Ghost Church **2**
Tall Herman Tower **7**
Toompea Castle **6**
Town Hall Square **3**

Russia, all of whom left their mark on the city's architecture. One of the best preserved medieval towns in northern Europe, it makes a beautiful impression from the sea, with its ancient city walls, church spires, and red-tile roofed homes. At the Old Town, you pass beneath the arches of Tallinn's ancient stone walls and enter a world of cobblestones, narrow alleys, and medieval buildings. It's a fun place to explore on foot.

While under German occupation in 1944, the city was bombed and 1,100 people were killed or wounded. Also at that time, about 11% of the Old Town was destroyed, and was replaced afterward by bleak Soviet architecture. Today, the city is growing rapidly, with modern buildings joining the old.

CURRENCY The national currency is called the kroon, abbreviated as EEK, and is made up of 100 sents. The kroon is pegged to the German mark, 1DEM = 8EEK. The rate of exchange at press time was $1 = 13.62 kroons.

LANGUAGE Estonian.

FROMMER'S FAVORITE TALLINN EXPERIENCES

- **Exploring Old Town.** Start at the Tall Herman Tower and explore the medieval world behind the old stone walls. Views to catch include the baroque Toompea Castle, now the residence of the Estonian Parliament; Town Hall Square and Tallinn's Gothic Town Hall; and the Holy Ghost Church, which dates to the 14th century.

COMING ASHORE & GETTING AROUND The pier in Tallinn is 1 to 2km (½ mile–1 mile) from the city center, depending on where the ship berths, and you can walk or take a **taxi,** which you'll find waiting at the pier. However, some ships dock in Muuga, which is about a 35-minute drive from Tallinn. You can explore Old Town on foot.

THE BEST SHORE EXCURSIONS

Historic Walking Tour (4 hr.; $35–$38): Visit Old Town, including Toompea Castle, the Russian Orthodox Church of Alexander Nevsky, the Holy Ghost Church, the Gothic Town Hall, and the partly ruined historic Dominican Monastery, where you'll hear a concert of medieval music before a final walk. Time is allowed for shopping in stores and from local vendors.

THE TOP ATTRACTIONS

Alexander Nevsky Cathedral This lovely Russian Orthodox church dominates Upper Town's skyline. Inside are numerous golden icons and mosaics.

Lossi Plats 10. ✆ **64/43-484.** Daily 9am–6pm.

The Dome Church (also known as St. Mary's) Of Gothic design, this church houses more than 100 medieval coats of arms.

Toom-Kooli 6. ✆ **64/44-140.** Tues–Sun 9am–5pm. Service Sun 10am, organ concerts Sat noon.

Estonian Open Air Museum Located in a picturesque bayside park, this cultural center features Estonian village architecture from the 18th and 19th centuries, including windmills, churches, and farmhouses. A folkloric show troupe performs traditional dances here.

Vabaõhumuuseumitee 12. ✆ **65/49-100.** Admission 25EEK ($1.85). Buildings daily 10am–6pm (grounds open until 8pm daily).

LOCAL FLAVORS

Estonian food is pretty plain. Local favorites include trout (smoked, pickled, or salted). The city is also home to a surprising array of international cuisine, including even Mexican and Asian food. One of the best local spots in Old Town is **Restaurant Laguun,** Vene 10 (✆ **63/14-727**), noted both for its historic setting (in well-preserved medieval living quarters) and its predominantly seafood cuisine. The locally caught crayfish makes a good choice when in season. In addition, the restaurant offers both hot and cold tasting plates with several items for those who can't settle on one choice.

BEST BUYS

Shop here for handicrafts, hand-knit woolen sweaters, ceramics, leather goods, amber jewelry, and artwork. Small shops can be found in the center of town.

5 Finland

Although not technically in Scandinavia, **Helsinki** acts very Scandinavian. Founded by Swedes in 1550, the city became Finland's capital in 1812. It continued in the same role during Finland's time as an autonomous Grand Duchy of Russia, and remained so when Finland became independent in 1917. In addition to being a business and industrial center, Helsinki today is an intellectual town with a major university and many cultural institutions. Quite sophisticated, the city offers tourists a clean environment with great museums, nice harbor views, and lots of shopping. Surrounded by water on three sides and including in its territory a number of islands, it's notable for its parks and squares and for its neoclassical city buildings, dating from the 19th century and planned out by German-born architect Carl Ludvig Engel.

CURRENCY As of March 2002, Finland switched entirely to the euro (€) for its currency. One euro is made up of 100 euro cents. The exchange rate at press time was $1 = .87€.

LANGUAGE Finnish. English is also commonly spoken.

FROMMER'S FAVORITE HELSINKI EXPERIENCES

- **Taking a boat to the Suomenlinna Fortress.** Fortresses and parks here are located on five interconnecting islands.
- **Going shopping.** The department store Stockmann offers the latest in Finnish design. Market Square is a fun scene for browsing.
- **Remembering Sibelius.** Visit the composer's home in the country, or view the tribute to him in Sibelius Park, where there's a monument constructed of 527 steel pipes.

COMING ASHORE & GETTING AROUND Ships dock near Market Square. It's easy to walk around central Helsinki to see such sights as Senate Square, where there's a monument to the Russian czar Alexander II; the 19th-century Lutheran Cathedral; Parliament House; and the Alvar Aalto–designed Finlandia Hall.

Helsinki has an efficient transportation network that includes buses, trams, subway (metro), and ferries. **Taxis** are available at the pier. The fare begins at 3.25€ ($3.75). Surcharges are imposed in the evening and on Sunday.

THE BEST SHORE EXCURSIONS

Art & Architecture (4 hr.; $72–$84): This tour combines a city tour with a visit to the charming Finnish countryside, including the coastal road, woodlands, and lake country. Visit Hvittrask, once the home of the famous Finnish architects Eliel Saarinen, Armas Lindgren, and Herman Gesellius. Built in 1902 of natural stone and logs, it sits on a hill overlooking a lake and surrounded by woods. An outstanding example of Finnish residential architecture, Hvittrask is now an exhibition center for Finnish art and handicrafts. Tour Saarinen's magnificent home before continuing on to Tarvaspaa, the former home and studio of Finland's national painter, Akseli Gallen-Kallela. Built around 1912 and designed by the artist himself, the house enjoys a park-like setting right on the sea. Gallen-Kallela's works and the story of his colorful life are on display here, as are exhibits by other famous artists depicting Finnish life.

City Tour (3 hr.; $36–$46): Pass the famous Uspenski Orthodox Cathedral with its brilliant gold onion domes en route to the Senate Square, site of several important buildings attributed to the neoclassic architect Carl Ludwig Engel. On Mannerheim Street, view the Parliament House, the National Museum, and Finlandia Hall, designed by the famous architect Alvar Aalto. Continue through lovely residential districts to the Olympic Stadium, site of the 1952 Olympic Games. You'll also pass the opera house, completed in 1993; stop at the Temppeliaukio Rock Church, a unique house of worship blasted into solid rock and topped by a copper dome; then make a photo stop at Sibelius Park, where you can photograph a monument constructed of 527 steel pipes honoring the great Finnish composer Jean Sibelius. The tour includes shopping time.

Porvoo & Highlights (6½ hr.; $108–$136): Drive 45 minutes along the picturesque, shipyard-lined coastal road to Porvoo, a popular artistic center that's the second-oldest town in Finland, dating back to 1346. Here you will visit the majestic 1418 medieval cathedral and walk along the cobblestone streets of the Old Quarter, with its ancient, multi-colored wooden houses. Time is allowed for some shopping. The tour also stops at Haikko Manor, one of the country's leading spas. A place of history, elegance, and romance, it overlooks the Gulf of Finland and dates back to 1362. Lunch and a brief city tour of Helsinki are included. (A 4½ hr. tour may also be available without lunch for about $89.)

Music of Sibelius (3hr.; $69–$89): Visit Ainoia (see below) the home of composer Jean Sibelius, and enjoy a performance by students from the Sibelius Summer School. Also includes a bus ride past Helsinki buildings of note including Parliament House and Finlandia Hall.

THE TOP ATTRACTIONS

Ainoia The Finns are very proud of composer Jean Sibelius, who lived here from 1904 until his death in 1957. He and his wife, Aino, for whom the house is named, are buried on the property.

Ainolantie, in Järvenpää. ✆ **09/287-322.** Admission 5€ ($5.75) adults, 2€ ($2.30) students, 1€ ($1.15) children. A guided tour is included in the admission charge for visits booked in advance. May–Sept Tues–Sun 10am–5pm. Closed Oct–Apr. Buses and trains run from Helsinki to Järvenpää, about 39km (24 miles) away.

Mannerheim Museum Once the home of Baron Carl Gustaf Mannerheim, marshal of Finland and president of the republic from 1944 to 1946, this museum houses his collection of European furniture, Asian art, and personal items including swords and decorations.

Kallionlinnantie 14. ✆ **09/635-443.** Admission, including a guided tour, 7€ ($8.05) adults, 5€ ($5.75) students and seniors, free for children 11 and under. Fri–Sun 11am–4pm.


0 0.25 mi
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N
FINLAND
Helsinki
Ainoia (Sibelius's Home) 8
The Esplanade 15
Finlandia Hall 4
Havis Amanda restaurant 14
Helsinki Railway Station 10
Lutheran Cathedral 12
Mannerheim Museum 17
Market Square (Kauppatori) 16
National Museum 5
Olympic Stadium 1
Opera House 2
Parliament House 6
Senate Square/
Alexander II monument 13
Sibelius Park 3
Soumenlinna Fortress 18
Temppeliaukio Rock Church 7
Uspenski Orthodox Cathedral 9
Stockmann department store 11
Töölönlahti
Eläintarhanlahti
Kaisaniemenlahti
Siltavuorensalmi
Pohjoissatama
Etelärantatama
Kaivopuisto
Hietalahti
Valksaari
Luoto
Central Railway Station
Urheilukatu
Mannerheimvägen
Helsinginkatu
Töölönkatu
Pohjoinen Hesperiankatu
Eteläinen Hesperiankatu
Karamzinkatu
Tölögatan
Museokatu
Temppelikatu
Nervanderinkatu
Arkadiagatan
Runebergsgatan
Pohj. Rautatiekatu
Salomonkatu
Annankatu
Simonkatu
Fredrikinkatu
Eriksgatan
Malminkatu
Lapinlandenkatu
Albertinkatu
Kalevagatan
Ruoholahdenkatu
Eerikinkatu
Abrahaminkatu
Hietalahdenkatu
Kalevankatu
Lönnrotinkatu
Lönnrotsgatan
Bulevardi
Alberts gatan
Uudenmaankatu
Fredriksgatan
Punavuorenkatu
Merimiehenkatu
Pursimiehenkatu
Telakkakatu
Merikatu
Juhani Ahontie
Havsgatan
Merisatamaranta
Ehrenströmintie
Sepänkatu
Jääkärinkatu
Vuorimiehenkatu
Tehtaankatu
Pietarinkatu
Bulevarden
Yrjönkatu
Iso Roobertinkatu
Hogbergsgatan
Kaisaniemenkatu
Kaisaniemenranta
Siltasaarenkatu
Säästöpankinranta
Pitkänsillanranta
Siltavuorenranta
Nora Kajan
Maurinkatu
Unioninkatu
Snellmaninkatu
Elisabetsgatan
Meritullinkatu
Mariankatu
Mariegatan
Pohjoisranta
Kirkkokatu
Unionsgatan
Hallituskatu
Aleksanterinkatu
Pohjois esplanadi
N. esplanaden
Kanavakatu
Luotsikatu
Eteläranta
Fabianinkatu
Kasergatan
Laivasillankatu
Tähtitornik Observgatan
Bergmansgatan
Fabriksgatan
Itainen Puistotie
Iso Puistotie
Puistokatu
Puistotie
Östra Allén
Skola Allén
Ehrenströmsvägen
To Suomenlinna Fortress & Helsinki Zoo
Cruise Ship Dock
Ferry
Railway

Suomenlinna Fortress Known as the Gibraltar of the North, the fortress dates back to 1748, when Finland was part of Sweden. It occupies five interconnected islands that guard maritime approaches to Helsinki. The main attractions include a well-preserved bastioned fort on the island of Kustaanmiekka, and another larger fortress on Susisaari, where you can also find a number of parks, squares, and gardens.

Suomenlinna. ✆ **09/684-1880.** Guided tours offered during the peak summer months (June–Sept) at 12:30 and 2:30pm are 4.30€ ($3.90) adults, 1.75€ ($1.60) children. At other times, tours are conducted on a private basis. Accessible by ferry from Market Square, with boats running about once an hour. The round-trip ferry ride costs about 5€ ($5.75) for adults, 2€ ($2.30) for children.

LOCAL FLAVORS

Typical ingredients of a Finnish **smörgåsbord** included herring, lightly salted fish and roe, smoked and cold fish dishes, reindeer meat, and desserts including fresh berries. Crayfish are in season late July to September (you'll need a bib when you eat them). An upscale city center tavern that's a good pick for lunch or dinner is **Havis Amanda,** Unioninkatu 23 (✆ **09/666-882**), named after the heroic female statue near its entrance. Finnish seafood is the main menu attraction (including the crayfish mentioned above). A two-course fixed-price lunch is 15€ to 22€ ($17–$25); or a four-course dinner 52€ to 56€ ($60–$64). Reservations are required. If a picnic is your fancy, get the fixings at Market Square (see below).

BEST BUYS

Best buys here include **Marimekko** with several stores throughout the city selling clothes and other items made from brightly colored fabrics, ceramics and glassware, handwoven articles, hand-carved wood, fashions (Fran bought a nifty pair of boots here once), rugs, and jewelry. Stores are open Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm and Saturday 9am to 2pm (sometimes until 4pm in the summer). Other good places to shop include the **Esplanadi,** for more upscale Finnish design offerings; and **Market Square** (Kauppatori), an open-air market open Monday to Saturday, where you can find food, souvenirs, and gift items. Beginning at the Esplanadi and extending to the Helsinki Railway Station, the area simply known as **Central** is the setting for Stockmann department store and other big name shops.

6 France

Le Havre (The Harbor) has been an important port since at least 1066, when the Normans conquered England. It remains the leading port on France's west coast, and offers tourists access to the rest of Normandy, the D-Day beaches, and Paris, which lies about a 3-hour drive away. The city itself is bustling and modern (it was almost completely destroyed during World War II), and is not really worth hanging around. Instead, book one of the shore excursions listed below.

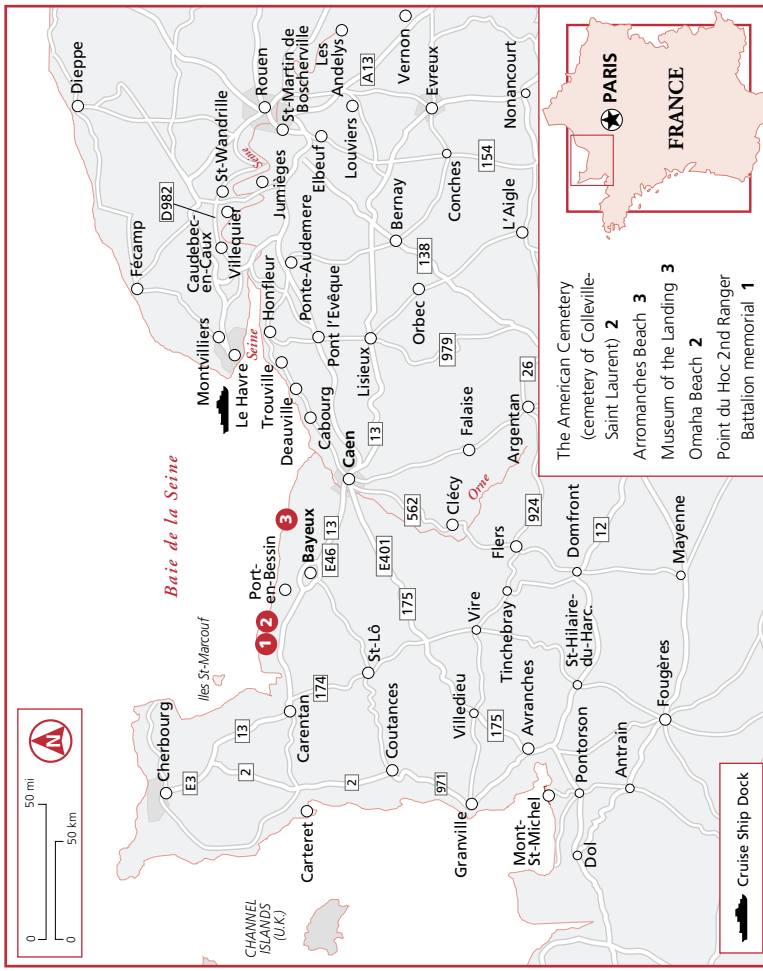
For France's Mediterranean ports, see chapter 11.

CURRENCY One euro is made up of 100 euro cents. The exchange rate at press time was $1 = .87€.

LANGUAGE French.

FROMMER'S FAVORITE LE HAVRE EXPERIENCES

- **Taking a shore excursion.** There's not a lot to see or do in Le Havre itself, so plan to take one of the shore excursions that leaves from the port. See below.



COMING ASHORE & GETTING AROUND The port is about 1.6km (1 mile) from the center of town. If you're not booking a shore excursion, take the **transfer** offered by the cruise line to Paris (priced at 86€–95€/$99–$109) and explore on your own. If you want to stay closer by, take a **taxi** to Honfleur, the quaint nearby fishing port (about 21km/13 miles from Le Havre). You can also take a boat from Le Havre to Deauville, the chic beach resort. ***Note:*** It is not easy to get from Le Havre to Paris by train, so if you want to visit the City of Light, you are better off taking the transfer mentioned above or a shore excursion.

THE BEST SHORE EXCURSIONS

Note: Similar tours may be offered from Honfleur, France.

Paris Highlights (10½–11 hr.; $111–$165): Spend the day in Paris, a 3-hour drive away. View the Arc de Triomphe, Champs Elysees, Place de la Concorde, Obelisk of Luxor, and the Eiffel Tower, and visit the Cathedral de Notre Dame. Also

includes lunch, and in some cases a boat ride on the Seine. (Transfers are also offered to Paris for those who want to explore on their own; 10 hr.; $99–$109.)

Landing Beaches of Normandy (9–10 hr.; $154–$166): On June 6, 1944, the 50th British Division towed a massive prefabricated port across the English Channel as part of the D-Day invasion, and installed it at the small fishing port of Arromanches-les-Baines, enabling supplies to be brought in for the Allied forces. The wreckage of the artificial harbor lies just off Arromanches Beach, which you'll visit on this tour, along with the Museum of the Landing, also in town. Also included are visits to Omaha Beach and the American Cemetery (cemetery of Colleville–Saint Laurent); Point du Hoc, site of a memorial to the three companies of the 2nd Ranger Battalion who climbed the 30m (100-ft.) cliffs on D-Day to capture the strategic position; and a drive past Sword, Juno, and Gold beaches.

The Sights of Rouen (4½-5 hr.; $62–$76): Take a guided walking tour of historic Rouen, including the imposing Gothic cathedral, dating from 1201, made famous by Claude Monet's Impressionist studies of its facade. Also view the Gros Horloge clock tower; Rue du Gros Horloge, where you'll find 15th- and 16th-century timber-framed houses; and Vieux Marchae, the area in which Joan of Arc was sentenced to death and burned at the stake in 1431. You will also see the nearby 15th-century Saint Maclou church. Time is allowed for shopping.

THE TOP ATTRACTIONS

Deauville This chic resort is where beach-lovers should head for a day of fun-in-the-sun.

On the coast, just east of Honfleur.

Honfleur This old Norman fishing village dates from the 11th century. In the early 17th century, colonists sailed from here for Quebec. The town was later popular with artists including Daubigny, Corot, and Monet. Stroll the old harbor, with its fishing boats and slate-roofed narrow houses, stop to eat at a sidewalk cafe, and browse in the art galleries and craft shops.

About 21km (13 miles) from Le Havre.

LOCAL FLAVORS

Regional specialties include cider, Calvados brandy, and Camembert cheese. *Sauce normande* is a rich white sauce. Tripe is a popular dish.

BEST BUYS

Shop here for ceramic ware, antiques (especially in Rouen), Calvados, and Camembert.

7 Germany

Germany is one of Europe's most complicated and diverse countries, wealthy and industrial but at the same time possessed of beautiful natural scenery. Though World War II took its toll on many of the nation's older buildings, much remains and has been restored—including much of Berlin, which has been essentially one big construction site over the past several years as the city geared up to once again become the capital of Germany in 2000, after a 50-year hiatus.

CURRENCY As of January 2002, Germany switched entirely to the euro (€) for its currency. One euro is made up of 100 euro cents. The exchange rate at press time was $1 = .87€.

LANGUAGE German. English is also commonly spoken, particularly by young people.

HAMBURG

Located on the River Elbe, Hamburg is known as both "the Venice of the North" for its numerous bridges (2,100 of them) and as "Sin City" for its famous Red Light district, St. Pauli. Stretching nearly 40km (25 miles), the Port of Hamburg is the world's fifth-largest harbor, a center of trade on the continent since 1189. Today, more than 1,500 ships from all over the world call here each month—including cruise ships, which visit mostly to give passengers an opportunity to see Berlin, 285km (177 miles) away. If you choose not to make that trek, though, there's still plenty to see in Hamburg itself.

The 1,200-year-old city was nearly destroyed during World War II. Old Hamburg still has buildings that date back to medieval times, but a new city with parks (it's the greenest city in Europe) and impressive buildings grew out of the rubble. Sights worth seeing include the neo-Renaissance Rathaus (town hall), which dominates Hamburg's main square, and the baroque St. Michael's Church.

FROMMER'S FAVORITE HAMBURG EXPERIENCES

- **Taking the shore excursion to Berlin,** or heading to Berlin on your own on the high-speed train. With its fascinating history, Berlin is one city you really shouldn't miss.
- **Walking around Hamburg,** comparing old architecture with new. Because of the damage caused by World War II bombing, many of the buildings are relatively new, an interesting counterpoint to what little was left of the old.

COMING ASHORE & GETTING AROUND Ships dock in Hamburg, about 1km (½ mile) from the city center. The most convenient way to get to Berlin is to book the shore excursion offered by the cruise line. There is also high-speed train service that takes about 150 minutes; by bus, it's about 3 hours. And the cruise line may offer its own bus transfer service for about 86€ ($99).

For those who want to stay in Hamburg, the city has one of the best **subway** systems in Germany, the U-Bahn. **Buses** offer a good alternative, and **taxis** are available at the pier, with metered fares that begin at about 2.50€ ($2.90).

THE BEST SHORE EXCURSIONS

Berlin City Tour (13 hr.; $199–$298): The itinerary includes the fascinating Checkpoint Charlie Museum, which provides an overview of how the Wall divided East and West Berlin for more than 40 years. The display here includes descriptions of how people tried to escape from East Berlin (many didn't make it). Other highlights include a visit to the impressive 19th-century Berlin Cathedral; a photo stop at the famous Brandenburg Gate; and a tour of the lavish Charlottenburg Palace, built as a summer palace in 1695 for the first Prussian king (it was heavily damaged during World War II but rebuilt in the 1950s). The tour includes lunch and shopping time.

Alster Lake Boat Tour

A boat trip on Alster Lake affords views of villas and sailing boats set against a panorama of towers and church spires. It also showcases beautiful **Alsterpark** on the northwest banks of the lake, which encompasses 70 manicured hectares (175 acres) of shade trees and gardens. **ATG-Alster-Touristik,** Am Anleger Jungfernstieg (✆ **040/3-57-42-40**), has departures about every 30 minutes from 10am to 6pm. The trip lasts about 50 minutes. Cassettes are available with a description of the sights in English, and a brochure in four languages (including English) is available from the captain. The trip costs about 7€ ($8.05) for adults, 4.50€ ($5.20) for children under 16. (Mar to late Sept daily, every half-hour, 10am to 6pm; Oct at 10am and every half-hour between 11am–4pm; Nov–Mar 10:30am, noon, 1:30pm, and 3pm.)

Your cruise line may offer special-interest shore excursions in Berlin as well. **The Berlin Jewish Heritage Tour** (12 hr.; $275) combines a Berlin city tour with a drive through the former East Berlin to visit the New Synagogue/Centrum Judaicum, which offers a look at historic and modern Jewish life in the city. The tour also passes the Jewish school and the Jewish cemetery, a reminder of Nazi violence in Berlin. Also visited are several memorials and a train station used by the Nazis for deportations. **Berlin's Allied Life** (12 hr.; $275) emphasizes the 45 years of Allied presence in Berlin. Included is the Glienicker Bridge, where American and Russian spies were exchanged; the former American residential areas of Berlin; and a stop at the new Allied Museum, where displays show the city from the Allied point of view. Lunch is served at Schoneberg Town Hall, where John F. Kennedy made his famous Berlin speech.

Hamburg City Tour (3 hr.; $49): This tour takes in the town hall, St. Michael's Church, and other sights including scenic Alster Lake.

THE TOP ATTRACTIONS

Hauptkirche St. Michaelis (St. Michael's Church) This baroque church is Hamburg's favorite landmark. Take the elevator or climb the 449 steps to the top of the hammered-copper tower for a sweeping view. The crypt, one of the largest in Europe, contains the tombs of famous citizens including Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach. An audiovisual show tells the history of the city.

Krayenkamp 4C, Michaeliskirchplatz. ✆ **040/3767-8100.** Entrance to the church is free, but to use the stairs or elevator costs about 2.50€ ($2.90). A combined ticket to the tower, show, and crypt costs about 5€ ($5.75). Apr–Sept daily 9am–6pm (until 10pm Thurs).

Rathaus Rathausplatz Hamburg's 647-room town hall is a Renaissance-style structure built in the late 19th century (modern compared to many of Germany's town halls). Its clock tower overlooks the city's largest canal.

✆ **040/36-81-24-70.** Guided tours 2€ ($2.30). Guided tours are offered in English Mon–Thurs hourly 10:15am–3:15pm; Fri–Sun 10:15am–1:15pm. No tours are offered during official functions.

St. Pauli The Red Light district is the nightlife center of Hamburg, and the most famous street is Reeperbahn. In addition to erotica in many forms (including sex shows), the district boasts cafes, bars, discos, and music halls.

About 1km (½ mile) from the Elbe, and split by the Reeperbahn.


0 50 mi
0 50 km
Sylt
Westerland
DENMARK
Flensburg
Baltic Sea
North Frisian Is.
Schleswig
Kiel Bay
Kiel
Hiddensee
Rügen
Stralsund
North Sea
Mecklenburg Bay
Warnemünde
Rostock
Pomeranian Bay
Greifswald
East Frisian Is.
Cuxhaven
Brunsbüttel
Lübeck
Wismar
Stettin Bay
West Frisian Is.
Wilhelmshaven
Bremerhaven
Elbe
Schwerin
Neubrandenburg
Hamburg
Emden
A29
Weser
Lake Müritz (Müritzsee)
Oldenburg
Bremen
Lüneburg
Elbe
Oder
POLAND
Celle
Ems
Aller
Brandenburg
BERLIN
Havel
THE NETHERLANDS
Osnabrück
Minden
Hannover
Potsdam
Frankfurt an der Oder
Bielefeld
Hildesheim
Braunschweig
Magdeburg
Oder
Münster
Hameln
Lippe
Detmold
Bad Pyrmont
Goslar
HARZ
Dessau
Wittenberg
Lübbenau
Cottbus
Rhine
Weser
Elbe
Spree
Neisse
Essen
Dortmund
Göttingen
Halle
Leipzig
Mönchengladbach
Düsseldorf
Ruhr
Kassel
BELG.
E45
E22
E234
E37
E30
E35
E34
E331
E31
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E55
E26
E28
E51
E36
E40

LOCAL FLAVORS

Seafood is a best bet, including lobster from Helgoland; shrimp from Büsum; turbot, plaice, and sole from the North Sea; and fresh oysters. For those interested in trying traditional local cuisine, a favorite is the sailor's dish, ***Labskaus,*** made with beer, onions, cured meat, potatoes, herring, and pickle. If you're adventurous, try the eel soup, another local favorite.

Among the leading restaurants is **Peter Lembcke,** Holzdamm 49 (✆ **040/24-32-90**), which has been in operation since 1910. You can get both Labskaus and eel soup here. The restaurant also serves excellent steaks. Reservations are recommended. Another good bet is the **Old Commercial Room,** Englische Planke 10 (✆ **040/36-63-19**), in St. Pauli. Founded in 1643, the restaurant is considered a premier sailors' stopover. The Labskaus here is considered the best in the city, and those ordering it get a numbered certificate proclaiming you are a genuine Labskaus-eater.

BEST BUYS

Clocks, cutlery (especially **J. A. Henckels**), and fashion items are good buys here. Two of the major shopping streets are **Grosse Bleichen** and **Neuer Wall.** Big department stores, including Horton and Karstadt, can be found on **Mönckebergstrasse.** The more upscale (think Bloomingdale's) **Alsterhaus** can be found on **Jungfernsteig,** Hamburg's main artery and shopping district.

WARNEMÜNDE & ROSTOCK

Like Hamburg, the seaside cities **Warnemünde** and **Rostock** in the former East Germany are visited by the cruise lines because they are fairly close to Berlin (about 3 hr. by bus). There is not much to do in Warnemünde, so if you land there we recommend, if you're not making the trek to Berlin, that you head to Rostock, which is about 8km (5 miles) away.

Rostock was founded in 1218. During the Cold War period it was East Germany's major seaport. The town still bustles with harbor activity, and there's a good maritime museum. Other sights worth seeing include St. Mary's Church, which dates to the 1400s; and Kröpeliner-Strasse, a pedestrian-only walkway lined with shops and restored historic buildings.

FROMMER'S FAVORITE WARNEMÜNDE EXPERIENCES

- **Taking a shore excursion to Berlin,** or heading to Berlin on your own. It's a city that shouldn't be missed.

COMING ASHORE & GETTING AROUND In both Warnemünde and Rostock, ships usually dock within walking distance of town. **Taxis** can be found at the taxi stand at the train station; your ship's shore excursions desk can also advise on taxis and may be able to make arrangements for you in advance of arrival. If you are not going to Berlin, and arrive in Warnemünde, take a taxi or train (there's frequent service) to Rostock, about 8km (5 miles) away, and then explore Old Town on foot.

THE BEST SHORE EXCURSIONS

Berlin City Tour: See description under Hamburg shore excursions, above.

Rostock City Tour (3½-4½ hr.; $50–$68): The tour includes Old Town, St. Mary's Church, and City Hall. Some tours also visit a local brewery that makes German Pilsner, or include a boat ride up the River Warnow.

THE TOP ATTRACTIONS

St-Marien-Kirche (St. Mary's Church) This Rostock church has a famous clock that dates back to the 1400s, with astrological figures on its face. You can also climb the tower for a panoramic city view.

Am Ziegenmarkt. ✆ **0381/4-92-33-96.** Admission 1.50€ ($1.75). Mon–Sat 10am–5pm; Sun worship at 10am.

Schiffahrtsmuseum (Navigational Museum) This Rostock museum contains exhibits related to the town's nautical history, from the Vikings on up to the early 20th century.

August-Bebel-Strasse 1. ✆ **0381/4-92-26-97.** Admission 2.50€ ($2.90) adults, 1.50€ ($1.75) children. Tues–Sun 10am–6pm.

LOCAL FLAVORS

The oldest sailor's pub in Rostock is **Zur Kogge,** where the decor includes all kinds of nautical items. Fish is the chef's specialty. Located at Wokrenterstrasse 27, on the harbor (✆ **0381/4-93-44-93**).

BEST BUYS

There are small shops in Warnemünde offering maritime souvenirs. In Rostock (to which you'll have to take a taxi), head to the pedestrian zone for a larger selection of stores, both traditional and modern.

8 Ireland

Ireland is a mass of contradictions. It's ancient, filled with Bronze-age forts, Viking walls, and Norman castles, but it's an adolescent in terms of its nationhood, having only severed its last constitutional ties to Britain in 1948. Although it's the land of poets and priests, it has been embroiled in factional struggle over the fate of the North for the better part of a century. And while it's a place from which the best and brightest fled for decades due to limited opportunities, Ireland is now home to the booming "Celtic Tiger" economy.

And it really is green. Remarkably green, in hues you hardly see elsewhere. In the countryside you can still see whitewashed thatch-roof houses sitting among verdant fields, as well as cozy pubs where the Guinness on tap was delivered fresh that morning from the brewery. In the cities, especially Dublin, you can find a mix of Georgian architecture and new development, and even some places (like Dublin's Temple Bar district) that are considered among the trendiest in Europe.

CURRENCY Ireland uses the euro (€) for its currency. One euro is made up of 100 euro cents. The exchange rate at press time was $1 = €.87.

LANGUAGE English. Irish Gaelic is spoken as well in some rural areas.

COBH

The port city of **Cobh** (pronounced "Cove"), formerly known as Queenstown, is used mostly as a jumping-off point for various excursions around Ireland's southeast. Highlights in the area include Cork, the second largest city in the Irish Republic, offering period buildings and churches and plenty of shopping opportunities; County Waterford, known for producing Waterford Crystal; Blarney Castle, home of the famous Blarney Stone; and the scenic environs of Killarney.

Outside of Cobh, the picturesque town of Kinsale is famed for its fine cuisine. And the East Cork town of Youghal (pronounced "yawl") is a leading beach resort and fishing port.

In the days before airline travel, Cobh was Ireland's chief port of entry and departure, and hosted about three or four transatlantic liners each week—it was the last port of call for the ill-fated *Titanic.* More than 2½ million emigrants departed Ireland here for new lives in the U.S., Canada, and Australia, most in the post-famine years of the early 20th century. A new visitor center, called **Cobh: The Queenstown Story,** tells the city's history as an emigration port. Photos of some of the early ocean liners that visited here can be found around town.

FROMMER'S FAVORITE COBH EXPERIENCES

- **Visiting picturesque Kinsale.** The town is picture-perfect, with a gorgeous harbor and narrow hilly streets dropping to the sea. Kinsale also has the largest concentration of fine restaurants outside of Dublin, and a nifty fort to explore.
- **Golfing at Old Head Links in Kinsale.** Although young, this is a world-class course and a legend in the making. The setting couldn't be more gorgeous, with the sea on three sides (greens fees for 18 holes are €250 ($288) and the caddy fee is €39 ($45) per bag.
- **Kissing the Blarney Stone.** Oh come on, you know you want to!
- **Sharing a pint of Guinness or porter** with the locals in any pub.

COMING ASHORE & GETTING AROUND You can walk into Cobh from the pier, but it's about 24km (15 miles) to Cork city. **Taxis** are available at the pier.

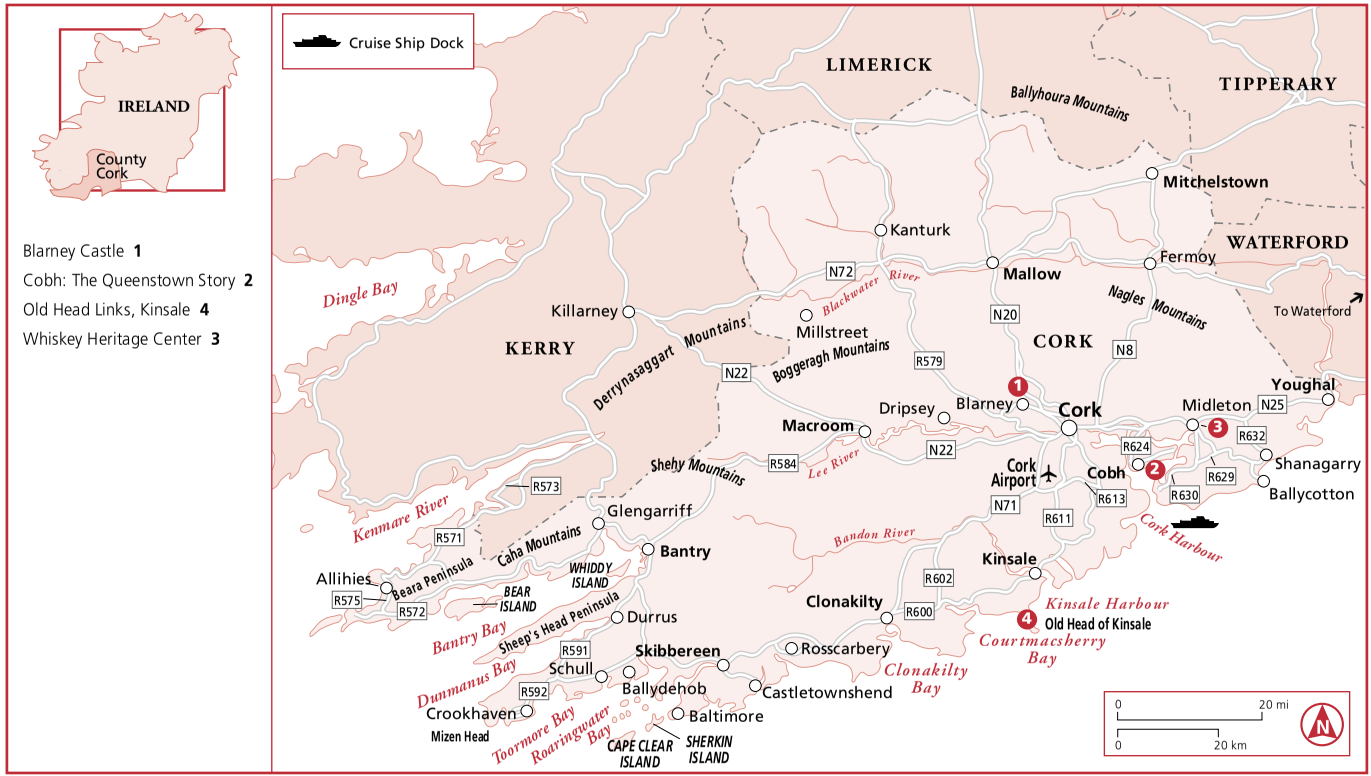
THE BEST SHORE EXCURSIONS

Cork & Blarney Castle (4½ hr.; $40–$65): Drive by bus to Cork, passing St. Anne's Cathedral, noted for its Shandon bells hung in 1752; and visiting St. Finbarr's Cathedral, located near the site where St. Finbarr founded his famous monastic school around 650. Then drive to Blarney, home of the magical Blarney Stone (which you can kiss if you're willing to walk up 100-plus steps to do so). Time is allowed to enjoy the formal gardens around the castle or to visit the Blarney Woolen Mills, where you can buy something to bring home.

A Visit to Cork, Kinsale, & Charles Fort (4–6½ hr.; $65–$76): A quick tour of Cork is followed by a bus trip through the countryside to Kinsale, known as the gourmet capital of Ireland. Enjoy a sample of "good taste" at a quaint waterfront cafe. Also at Kinsale's harbor, enjoy the views at the 17th-century Charles Fort, named for King Charles II.

Whiskey Heritage Center & Youghal (3½–4½ hr.; $44–$49): Drive by bus to Midleton, a small market town best known as the home of the Jameson Irish Whiskey Heritage Center. Although the Midleton distillery is one of the most modern in Europe, relics of its 19th-century origins remain, including the old waterwheel and a gleaming 30,000-gallon copper pot, said to be the largest in the world. On the way back, visit Youghal, a historic seaport where Sir Walter Raleigh was once mayor (and where he purportedly first tried tobacco). A whiskey tasting is included in the distillery tour.

A Day in Killarney (8½ hr.; $100–$124): Drive past the highlights in Cork, then continue on to Killarney, in County Kerry. Beautiful lakes and mountains


IRELAND
County Cork
Blarney Castle 1
Cobh: The Queenstown Story 2
Old Head Links, Kinsale 4
Whiskey Heritage Center 3
Cruise Ship Dock
LIMERICK
TIPPERARY
WATERFORD
KERRY
CORK
Ballyhoura Mountains
Mitchelstown
Kanturk
Fermoy
Mallow
Nagles Mountains
To Waterford
Dingle Bay
Killarney
Blackwater River
Millstreet
Derrynasaggart Mountains
Boggeragh Mountains
Youghal
Dripsey
Blarney
Cork
Midleton
Macroom
Shehy Mountains
Lee River
Cork Airport
Cobh
Shanagarry
Ballycotton
Kenmare River
Glengarriff
Caha Mountains
Bandon River
Cork Harbour
Bantry
Kinsale
Allihies
Beara Peninsula
WHIDDY ISLAND
BEAR ISLAND
Sheep's Head Peninsula
Clonakilty
Kinsale Harbour
Old Head of Kinsale
Courtmacsherry Bay
Bantry Bay
Durrus
Dunmanus Bay
Skibbereen
Rosscarbery
Clonakilty Bay
Schull
Ballydehob
Castletownshend
Crookhaven
Mizen Head
Toormore Bay
Roaringwater Bay
Baltimore
CAPE CLEAR ISLAND
SHERKIN ISLAND
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make this region one of the most celebrated in Ireland. The tour here includes a visit to the restored Victorian Muckross Manor House and Gardens, located in a magnificent setting in Killarney National Park. Lunch at the Killarney Park Hotel is included, and time is allowed for exploring the beautiful town.

Waterford & Waterford Crystal (9 hr.; $100–$115): From Cobh, cross the agricultural plains of east Cork to Youghal, an old fishing port with fine sandy beaches that resembles a New England seaport (it was used as a setting for the 1950s film *Moby Dick*). Cross the Blackwater River into scenic County Waterford. At the Waterford Crystal Works, watch master craftspeople demonstrate glassblowing, cutting, polishing, and engraving. Also visit the gallery, displaying the world's largest collection of Waterford. The excursion includes lunch and shopping opportunities, and may also feature the 12th-century Waterford Castle or a stop at a typical country pub in the heritage town of Lismore.

THE TOP ATTRACTIONS

We recommend you take one of the shore excursions above, but if you do stay in town, check out the following:

Cobh This new heritage center, located in a former railway station, commemorates the days when Cobh, then known as Queenstown, was a vital link in transatlantic traffic. The center tells the story of the city, the harbor, and the Irish exodus in a series of displays with an audiovisual presentation. The center also offers exhibits that re-create the age of luxury-liner travel. A genealogical referral service is in the works.

The Queenstown Story. Cobh Railway Station. ✆ **021/813591.** Admission €5 ($5.75) adults, €4 ($4.60) students and seniors, €2.50 ($2.90) children; family rates (2 adults and 2 children) €15 ($18). May–Nov daily 10am–6pm (last admission at 5pm); Nov–May daily 10am–5pm (last admission at 4pm).

LOCAL FLAVORS

It's not just meat and potatoes, although Irish beef is quite popular. The star of most menus these days is seafood, including wild Irish salmon, Dublin Bay prawns, Galway oysters, Kinsale and Wexford mussels, Kerry scallops, Dingle Bay lobster, and Donegal crab. Wash it all down with a Guinness or two. If you try an Irish breakfast, you'll be presented with a feast of eggs, bacon and other pork products, traditional brown bread, and more.

BEST BUYS

Shop here for Waterford crystal, Irish linens, crafts, woolens, pottery, and whiskey. In Cork, try **Patrick Street,** the main shopping thoroughfare, or look for antiques on **Paul's Lane.** The legendary department store **Cashs** at 18 Patrick St. dates back to the 1830s.

Fun Fact **Kiss and Tell: The Legend of the Blarney Stone**

Here's the real deal with the Blarney Stone kissing tradition. Back in the 1830s, one Father Prout wrote: "There's a stone there / That whoever kisses / Oh! he never misses / To grow eloquent." From that line, a tourist attraction was instantly created. The stone is wedged underneath the battlements of Blarney Castle. It's kind of hard to reach—you have to lie on your back and slide your head under the wall—but that doesn't stop countless tourists from coming up for a smooch.

DUBLIN

Divided into north and south by the River Liffey, Ireland's capital offers noble public buildings, superb museums and art galleries, magnificent St. Patrick's Cathedral, lovely Trinity College (where the 8th-century Book of Kells is displayed), and tempting shopping. Once barely passable as a European capital, Dublin is on the fast track these days, a hub of computer software development and booming with the roar of Ireland's "Celtic Tiger" economy. With such prominence comes the key components to any major city: money, young people, and flair. So, to the last generation's surprise, Dublin is now a hip, young place with excellent international cuisine, five-star hotels, and posh nightclubs. The Dublin of old—struggling and dilapidated even just 10 years ago—has become one of the hottest up-and-coming places to live in Europe.

The city retains its charm and history in the middle of all this modernizing, though. In fact, it's the booming economy that has allowed Dublin to clean up its act and drop money into restoring public buildings and historical exhibits. The writer (and Dubliner) James Joyce once characterized the city as "our dear, dirty Dublin." You wonder what he would think of the place today, in all its modern finery. Not that the city has lost the graciousness of olden days, mind you. Far from it. You can still find remnants of Georgian splendor, medieval churches and imposing castles, broad boulevards, and picturesque parks. Worth exploring on foot are the Temple Bar area (Dublin's self-proclaimed Left Bank) and the Trinity College and St. Stephen's Green/Grafton Street areas.

FROMMER'S FAVORITE DUBLIN EXPERIENCES

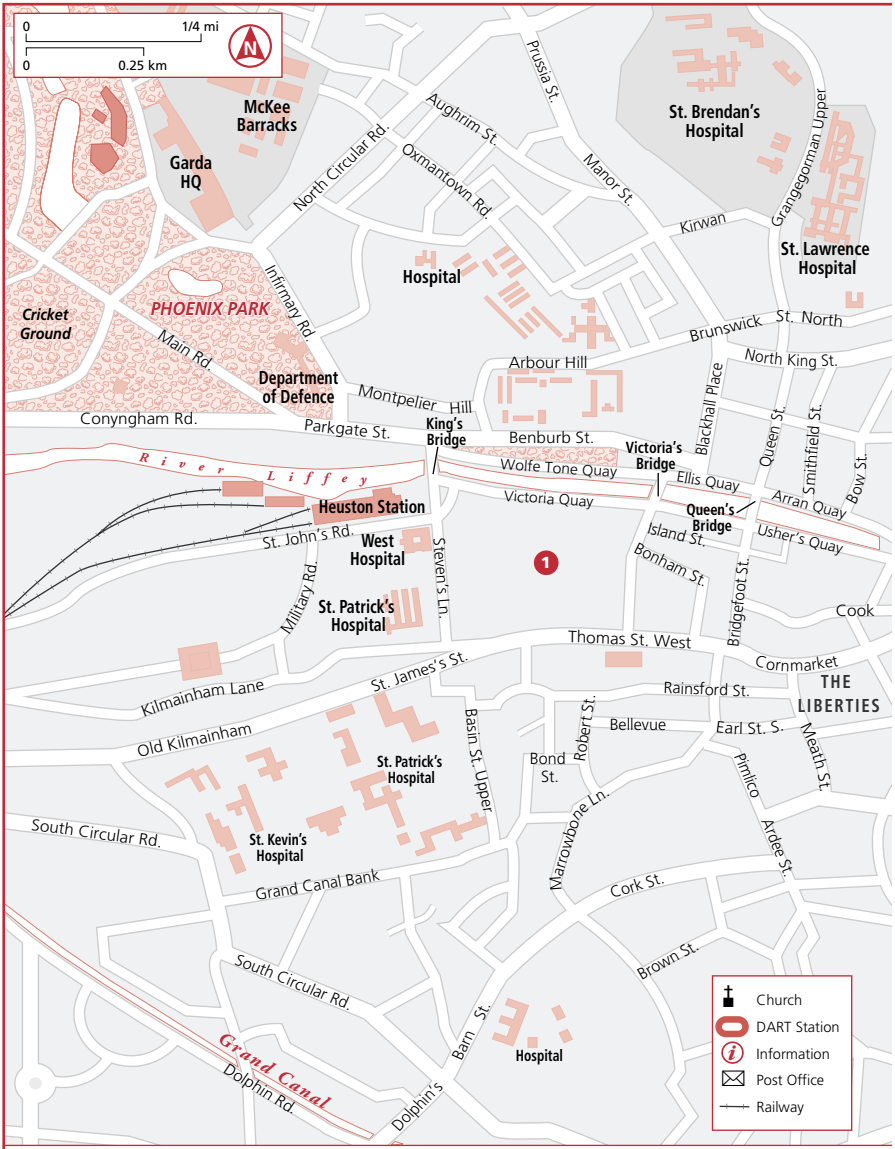
- **Pub crawling.** The pub has for centuries been the mainstay of Irish social life, and there are more than 1,000 of them in the city, literally on every street and at every turn. See "Local Flavors," below, for suggestions of a few of the city's best.
- **Exploring.** Don't forget Grafton Street for great shopping, St. Stephen's Green for a bucolic moment, Trinity College for historical splendor, and Temple Bar for one of the hippest scenes in Europe.
- **Playing golf.** A quarter of Ireland's top courses are within an hour's drive of the city, including the **Portmarnock Golf Club** (✆ **01/846-0611**), located at the former Jameson whiskey family home (now a big golf resort) with the 18-hole links designed by Bernhard Langer; and the **Royal Dublin Golf Club** (✆ **01/833-6346**), a traditional links with an excellent view of Dublin Bay.
- **Taking a scenic shore excursion** to Glendalough and Powerscourt or Malahide Castle (see below).

COMING ASHORE & GETTING AROUND Ships dock about 2.4km (1½ miles) from the city center at the Dublin Port. Smaller ships may come right up the River Liffey into the city center. **Taxis** are available at the pier. Double-decker **buses,** single-deck buses, and minibuses operate throughout the city and suburbs.

THE BEST SHORE EXCURSIONS

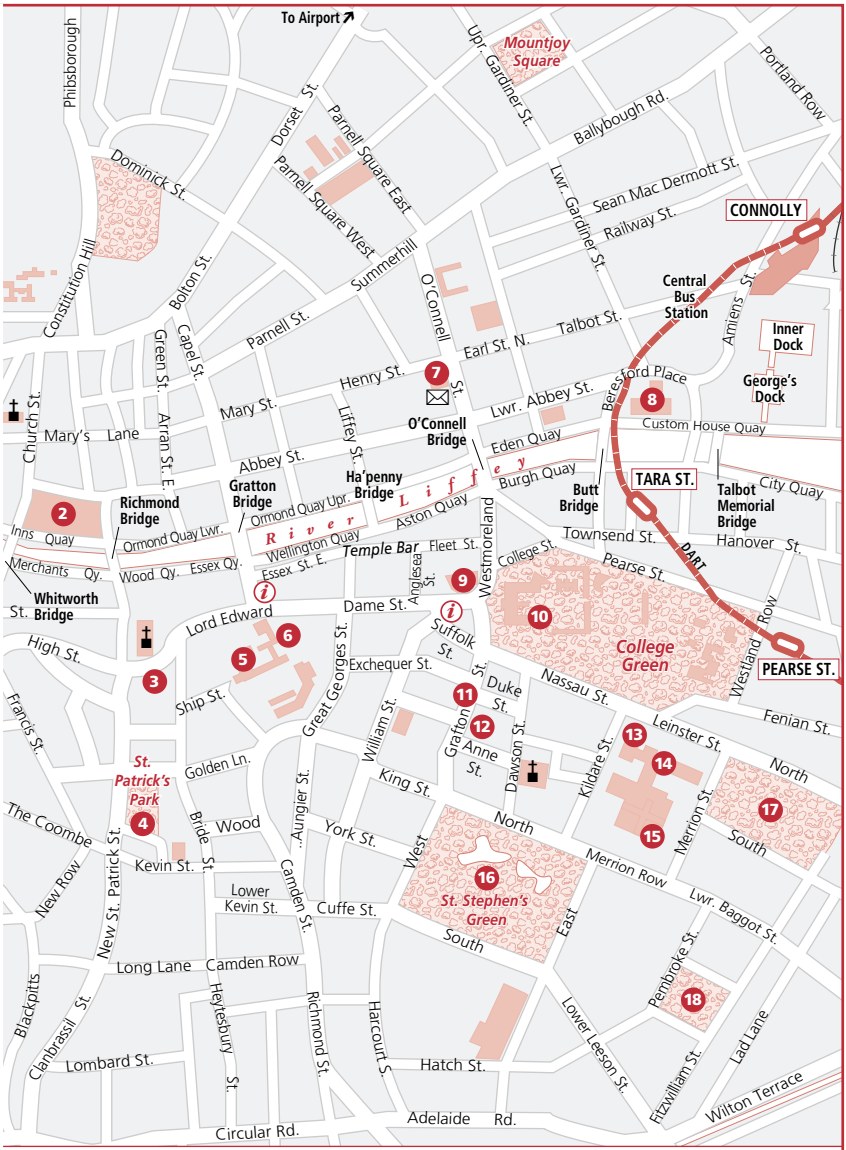
Dublin Highlights (4 hr.; $49): Accomplished mostly by bus, this tour takes you past the Customs House, one of James Gandon's architectural triumphs (he also designed the Parliament House, which now houses the Bank of Ireland), Trinity College, Merrion Square and Fitzwilliam Square, the National Gallery, St. Stephen's Green and Dawson Street, City Hall and Dublin Castle,

Dublin





Bewley's Café **12**
City Hall **6**
Customs House **8**
Dublin Castle **5**
Fitzwilliam Square **18**
Four Courts **2**
General Post Office **7**
Grafton Street **11**
Guinness Brewery **1**
Heraldic Museum/Genealogical Office **13**
Leo Burdock's **3**
Merrion Square **17**



National Gallery **14**
National Museum **15**
Parliament House/Bank of Ireland **9**
St. Patrick's Cathedral **4**
St. Stephen's Green **16**
Trinity College **10**

St. Patrick's Cathedral, the Guinness Brewery, the homes of the president of Ireland and the American ambassador, Ireland's Courts of Justice (Four Courts), and the General Post Office, headquarters of the 1916 uprising and birthplace of the Irish nation.

Powerscourt Estate and Gardens (4½ hr.; $54–$64): Travel to Enniskerry, one of Ireland's prettiest villages, and the gardens of Powerscourt Estate. The 13,600 hectares (34,000 acres) of this majestic property extend along both shores of the River Dargle. The house at Powerscourt has recently been refurbished to include both an exhibition of the history of the estate and a shop for quality Irish goods, such as crystal and linen. The tour includes shopping time.

Coastal Drive & Malahide Castle (3½ hr.; $54): Drive along the coast to Malahide, about 13km (8 miles) north of Dublin, to visit one of Ireland's oldest castles. Malahide Castle was occupied by the aristocratic Anglo-Irish Talbot family from 1185 to 1973. Fully restored, the interior offers one of the finest collections of Irish period furniture, dating from the 17th through the 19th centuries, and one-of-a-kind historic portraits on loan from the National Gallery. After touring the house, you can explore the 100-hectare (250-acre) estate, which includes 8 hectares (20 acres) of prized gardens with 5,000 varieties of plants and flowers. Also includes a stop at the quaint fishing port of Howth, where you may be served an Irish coffee (with whiskey) at a local pub.

THE TOP ATTRACTIONS

In addition to the attractions listed below, several private companies offer escorted walking tours of Dublin. One of the best is the **Jameson Literary Pub Crawl** (✆ **01/670-5602**) which visits pubs with connections to Joyce, Behan, Beckett, Kavanagh, and other Irish writers. Actors provide appropriate performances and commentary at the stops. The tour assembles at the Duke Pub, 9 Duke Street, off Grafton. Tickets go on sale at the pub at 7pm or buy them in advance at the Dublin Tourism office on Suffolk Street. (Tickets €10-$11 adults, €8-$8.20 students. In summer, tours start Mon–Sat 7:30pm, Sun noon; winter tours are Thurs–Sun at 7:30pm, Sun noon.)

The Guinness Storehouse Learn everything you never knew you wanted to know about the "black stuff," and at the end of your tour you can try a complimentary pint. The $35 million museum opened in 2000 (it replaced an older visitor center) and is located in the Guinness factory complex. Several floors of exhibit space explain the history of the 250-year-old beer and brewing process, but our favorite display is about Guinness advertising, which includes commercials with the old tag line "Guinness is good for you." There's also a rooftop bar and a big gift shop (where you can buy really cool Guinness poster reproductions for about €5.20/$6).

St. Jame's Gate. ✆ **01/408-4800.** Admission €13 ($16) adults, €6.50 ($7.50) students and seniors, €3 ($3.45) children 6–12, children under 6 free, €28 ($33) family (2 adults and 2 children). Daily 9:30am–5pm.

Heraldic Museum/Genealogical Office The unique collection of heraldry includes shields, banners, coins, paintings, porcelain, and stamps depicting coats of arms. This is also the place to start tracing your Irish roots (for a fee of about €27/$31).

2 Kildare St. ✆ **01/603-3011.** Free admission. Mon–Wed 10am–8pm; Thurs–Fri 10am–4:30pm; Sat 10am–12:30pm.

National Gallery This gallery, which opened its doors in 1864, has a fine collection of paintings, drawings, miniatures, prints, sculpture, and objets d'art.

Every major school of European painting is represented. A new wing opened in 2002.

Merrion Sq. W. ✆ **01/661-5133.** Free admission. Mon–Wed and Fri–Sat 9:30am–5:30pm; Thurs 9:30am–8:30pm; Sun noon–5pm.

National Museum Established in 1890, the National Museum complex comprises the **Natural History Museum, the Archaeological Museum,** and **Collins Barracks,** all within a 4-block area. The Archaeological Museum exhibits Irish heritage items from 2000 B.C. to the present, including the Ardagh Chalice, Tara Brooch, and Cross of Cong. Restored Collins Barracks, said to be the oldest military barracks in Europe, displays weaponry, Irish silverware, and antique furniture.

Kildare St. (Natural History), Merrion St. (Archaeological), and Benburb St. (Collins Barracks). ✆ **01/677-7444.** Free admission. Tues–Sat 10am–5pm; Sun 2–5pm.

St. Patrick's Cathedral Founded in 1190 (though a church has actually stood at the site since 450), St. Patrick's is the largest Protestant cathedral in Dublin and the national cathedral of the Church of Ireland. The most famous of St. Patrick's many renowned deans was Jonathan Swift, author of *Gulliver's Travels.*

St. Patrick's Close, Patrick St. ✆ **01/454-3511.** Admission about €2.50 ($2.90) adults, €1.50 ($1.75) students and seniors, €8.50 ($9.80) for families. Mon 10am–1pm; Wed–Fri 10am–1pm and 2pm–5pm; Sat 10:30am–1pm.

Trinity College & the Book of Kells The oldest university in Ireland, Trinity was founded in 1592 by Queen Elizabeth I. It sits in the heart of the city on a beautiful 16-hectare (40-acre) site just south of the River Liffey. The college is home to the Book of Kells, an 8th-century version of the four Gospels with elaborate scripting and illumination. One page per day is turned for public viewing.

College Street. ✆ **01/608-2320.** Admission to see the book about €7 ($8.05) adults, €6 ($6.90) seniors and students, free for children under 12. Mon–Sat 9:30am–5pm; Sun noon–4:30pm (opens 9:30am on Sun June–Sept).

LOCAL FLAVORS

Dining in Dublin offers great variety that includes Old World hotels, casual bistros, wine bars, and ethnic cuisine. Non-Irish offerings tend towards French and Italian, and you can find a good concentration of trendy spots in the Temple Bar area. One place you can enjoy a quintessential Dublin experience is **Bewley's Café,** 78/79 Grafton St. (✆ **01/677-6761**), a three-story landmark opened in 1840. Done up in traditional, if a bit decayed, decor, it specializes in coffees and teas, home-baked scones, pastries, and sticky buns. If you've got a craving for fish and chips, **Leo Burdock's,** 2 Werburgh St. (✆ **01/454-0306**), offers the best takeout.

Pubs are everywhere, and we urge you to just pick one close by and walk in. But for those shy about doing that, a few suggestions: For conversation and atmosphere try **The Stag's Head,** 1 Dame Ct., off Dame St. (✆ **01/679-3701**), which is done up with stags' heads on the walls; **The Long Hall,** 51 S. Great George's St. (✆ **01/475-1590**), pretty and oft-photographed for its Victorian decor; and **Brazens Head,** 20 Lower Bridge St. (✆ **01/677-9549**), which claims to be the city's oldest pub. For traditional music, head to **Mother Red Caps Tavern,** Back Lane (✆ **01/454-4655**), where people just show up with their instruments or voices at midday on Sundays; or **Kitty O'Shea's,** 23–25 Upper Grand Canal St. (✆ **01/660-9965**), where Irish music is on tap most nights.

BEST BUYS

Grafton Street, which is open to pedestrians only, offers a parade of boutiques, department stores, and specialty shops, as well as a festive atmosphere complete with street performers and sidewalk artists. Nearby **Temple Bar** features interesting boutiques as well as art and music shops. (See Cobh for the best Irish products.)

9 The Netherlands (Holland)

Is it Holland or the Netherlands? Actually, it's both, and before that it was Batavia. But whatever you call it, this small country offers a lot more than wooden shoes, tulips, and windmills. There's incredible art for one—this is the home country of van Gogh, not to mention the Dutch masters. It's also the home of dikes and canals, of historic towns, of beautiful and raucous Amsterdam, of the Hague and the International Court of Justice, and of a cultured populace that appreciates history and the outdoors and also knows how to have a good time.

CURRENCY As of February 2002, the Netherlands switched entirely to the euro (€) for its currency. One euro is made up of 100 euro cents. The exchange rate at press time was $1 = .87€.

LANGUAGE Dutch. English is also commonly spoken.

AMSTERDAM

Spread out over 70 islands, Amsterdam boasts 97km (60 miles) of canals, 1,000 bridges, and the largest Old Town in Europe. It's a city with a history—boats have sailed from here since the 13th century, and its 17th-century town houses and Floating Flower Market are full of old-world charm. But Amsterdam is also a young and exciting place offering everything from the erotic sights of the Red Light District, to a plethora of shopping and nightlife options, to world-renowned art museums—it's been a big art city since the time of Rembrandt. Anne Frank and her family hid in a house here for 2 years, and visitors can tour the attic where she wrote her famous diary before being discovered by the Nazis. It's a very moving experience.

On the outskirts of the city, several quaint villages are worth exploring including Delft, where the famous blue and white pottery is made.

COMING ASHORE & GETTING AROUND Your ship will dock at one of the three terminals: Amsterdam Passenger Terminal (APT), about a 15-minute walk to the city center; Felison Terminal, a 30-minute drive; or Scandia Terminal, a 15-minute drive. In any case, Centraal Station, near Dam Square, is a good start-off point.

Amsterdam is easy to explore by foot or boat. **Biking** is another option. Although popular with the Dutch, you need to be careful if you try it: Riding on cobblestones can be tricky. You can rent bikes for about 5.50€ ($6.30) a day (with a deposit required) from **Mac Bike,** Mr. Visserplein 2 (✆ **020/620-09-85**), or **Mac Bike Too,** Marnixstraat 220 (✆ **020/626-6964**).

Or rent a **water bike** to pedal along the canals. A two-seater goes for about 6.50€ ($7.50) per person per hour; a four-seater for about 5.50€ ($6.30) per person per hour. Moorings are at Centraal Station, Leidseplein, Westerkerk (near the Anne Frank house), Stadhouderskade (between the Rijksmuseum and Heineken Brewery Museum), and Toronto Bridge on the Keizersgracht, near Leidsestraat.

Taxis are available at the pier. Officially, you are not supposed to hail a cab on the street (although they may stop for you anyway) but should instead call **Taxi Centrale** (✆ **020/677-7777**). The city also has an extensive **bus** and **tram** network, as well as two **subway** lines.

FROMMER'S FAVORITE AMSTERDAM EXPERIENCES

- **Strolling the Red Light District.** The architecture is neat and the ladies in the windows rather fascinating (from the outside, anyway).
- **Visiting Anne Frank's house.** You'll find it a moving experience.
- **Taking a canal boat trip.** The boat's-eye view is the best for seeing the city's famed gabled houses and numerous bridges. You can catch a boat at key locations around town, including along Damrak or Prins Hendrikkade near Centraal Station, on the Rokin near Muntplein, and near Liedseplein. For a 1-hr. ride, the cost is 6€ to 8€ ($6.90–$9.20) for adults, 5€ to 6€ ($5.75–$6.90) for children. The **Museumboot** (✆ **020/622-2181**) operates canal boats near virtually all Amsterdam's museums and attractions. The boats leave from in front of Centraal Station every 30 minutes daily from 10am to 5pm. Tickets are available at the Lovers Canal Cruises counter near the dock. A day ticket is 12€ ($14) adults, and 7€ ($8.05) after 1pm and for seniors or children 13 and under. The ticket allows reduced admission to most of the museums on the route. There are English-speaking guides on the boats.
- **Do a self-guided, self-powered tour on a Canal Bike.** These small pedal boats for two to four are available from **Canal Bike** (✆ **020/626-5574**) at Leidseplein near the Rijksmuseum, at Westerkerk, and on Keizersgracht near Leidsestraat. Canal bikes are available daily from 10am to 4pm in spring and autumn (to 10pm in summer). The hourly rate is 7.50€ ($8.65) a head for one or two people and 6€ ($6.90) a head for three or four. There's a 25€ ($29) refundable deposit. You can pick one up at one jetty and drop it off at another.
- **Museum-hopping.** This is one of the best cities in the world for this activity. Start with the van Gogh Museum.
- **Photographing the floating flower market.** At the market on the Singel at Muntplein, rows of barges sell fresh-cut flowers, plants, and tulip bulbs.

THE BEST SHORE EXCURSIONS

Amsterdam City Tour (3½-4 hr.; $36–$42): This highlights tour passes Dam Square, the Royal Palace, the 550-year-old Nieuwe Kerk (New Church), the Portuguese Synagogue, and Rembrandt's House. Then you board a glass-topped motor launch for a canal ride past historic sights including the narrowest house in Amsterdam, the skinny bridge over Amstel River, and the Anne Frank House. Some tours also visit the Rijksmuseum.

Traditional Fishing Villages (4 hr.; $36–$40): This bus and walking tour visits the quaint towns of Marken, Monnikendam, and Volendam. Highlights include views of the lush countryside, cobblestone streets with colorful homes, boat-filled harbors, and a visit to a cheese factory.

Grand Holland (7–8 hr.; $114): This tour visits Holland's Royal City, the Hague. Drive past the Royal Palace, Houses of Parliament, and Peace Palace. Also visit Delft, one of the oldest cities in Holland and home of the Delft pottery factory, famous for its blue and white pottery. Lunch is included. Some tours include a stop at Aalsmeer to view the flower auction, or a stop at Madurodam, a miniature reproduction of a typical Dutch city.

Central Amsterdam



Amsterdam Diamond Center **16**
Anne Frankhuis (Anne Frank House) **11**
Centraal Station **18**
Coster Diamonds **5**
Dam Square **14**
De Bijenkorf department store **14**
Floating Flower Market **10**
Gassan Diamonds **20**
Joods Historisch Museum (Jewish Historical Museum) **21**
Kalverstraat **15**
Koninklijk Paleis (Royal Palace) **13**
Leidsestraat **9**
Nieuwe Kerk (New Church) **12**
Nieuwe Spiegelstraat **8**
P.C. Hooftstraat **7**
Portuguese Synagogue **22**
Rembrandt's House **19**
Rijksmuseum **6**
Rokin **16**
Stedelijk Museum of Modern Art **3**
Van Baerlestraat **2**
Van Gogh Museum **4**
Van Moppes Diamonds **1**
The Walletjes (Red Light District) **17**




Het IJ
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0.2 mi
0
0.2 km
N
Information
Post office
Railway
IJ-Tunnel
De Ruijterkade
Centraal Station
18
Openbaven
Prins Hendrikkade
Front
Damrak
Zeedijk
Nieuwendijk
Warmoesstraat
Oudekerks-plein
RED LIGHT DISTRICT
17
Erotic Museum
Hash, Marijuana & Hemp Museum
Oudezijds Voorburgwal
Nieuw-markt
Geldersekade
Kromme Waal
Oude Waal
Waals Eilandsgracht
Oosterdok
Prins Hendrikkade
Kattenburgerstraat
Nieuwe Vaart
Hoogtekadijk
Oude Schans
Uilenburgerstraat
Nieuwe
20
Uilenburgergracht
Valkenburgerstraat
Rapenburgerstraat
Kloveniersburgwal
Groenburgwal
19
Waterloo-plein
Mr. Visserplein
Herengracht
Entrepotdok
Plantage Doklaan
Plantage Kerklaan
Plantage Middenlaan
ARTIS
22
21
Nieuwe
Rembrandt-plein
straat
Amstel River
Keizersgracht
Plantage Muidergracht
Nieuwe
Kerkstraat
Nieuwe
Prinsengracht
Achtergracht
Kerkstraat
Utrechtsestraat
Nieuwe
Weesperstraat
Sarphatistraat
Falckstraat
Frederiks-plein
Sarphatistraat
Mauritskade
Mauritskade
Wibautstraat
OOSTER-PARK
Singelgracht
Stadhouderskade
Ruyschstraat
Blasiusstraat
1e Oosterparkstraat

THE TOP ATTRACTIONS

Anne Frankhuis (Anne Frank House) No one should miss this moving experience. The young Jewish girl Anne Frank wrote her diary here while hiding from the Nazis from 1942 to 1944. There's a small exhibit on the Holocaust, and you can view the famous attic where Anne and her family lived. The house is so small groups are not allowed, so you can only visit on your own (and not on shore excursions).

Prinsengracht 263 (just below Westermarkt). ✆ **020/556-7100.** Admission 6.50€ ($7.50), 3€ ($3.45) students, children under 10 free. Apr–Aug daily 9am–9pm; Sept–Mar daily 9am–7pm.

Joods Historisch Museum (Jewish Historical Museum) Located in a renovated Ashkenazi synagogue in the city's old Jewish Quarter, this museum surveys the social and cultural history of the Jewish community in the Netherlands, during both good times and bad.

Jonas Daniël Meijerplein 2-4 (near Waterlooplein). ✆ **020/626-9945.** Admission about 5€ ($5.75) adults, 2.50€ ($2.90) students, 1.50€ ($1.05) children 6–12, free for children under 6. Daily 11am–5pm.

Koninklijk Paleis (Royal Palace) Built in the 17th century as the City Hall, the building was turned into the palace in 1808 by Napoleon when he came to Amsterdam. Decorated in Empire Style, it is still used for receptions and official ceremonies by her majesty the queen.

Dam Square. ✆ **020/620-4060.** Admission about 4€ ($4.60) adults, 3€ ($3.45) students and seniors, free for children under 5. June–Oct daily 11am–5pm; Nov to mid-Dec and mid-Feb to May generally Tues–Thurs 12:30–5pm (opening hours and days are highly variable; check before going).

Rijksmuseum This major art museum houses the largest art collection in the Netherlands. Paintings date from the 15th century to the 19th century, including 22 Rembrandts (*Night Watch* is the most famous), plus works by Vermeer, Frans Hals, Alvert Cuyp, and Jan Steen. The print room houses one million prints and drawings.

Stadhouderskade 42 (behind Museumplein). ✆ **020/670-7047.** Admission 8.50€ ($9.80) adults, free for children under 18. Daily 10am–5pm.

Stedelijk Museum of Modern Art The collection of contemporary art includes such Dutch painters as Karel Appel, Willem de Kooning, and Piet Mondrian, as well as works by Chagall, Cézanne, Picasso, Renoir, Monet, and Manet, and Americans Calder, Oldenburg, Rosenquist, and Warhol.

The Ladies of the Night

The Walletjes (Red Light District), the warren of streets around Oudezijds Achterburgwal and Oudezijds Voorburgwal by the Oude Kerk, is one of the city's major tourist attractions. The district's ladies represent a cross-section of nationalities, displayed in windows and doorways in various stages of undress.

There's plenty to see during the day, but if you choose to tour this area at night, you should exercise extreme caution. Watch out for pickpockets and don't let the more aggressive ladies pull you into their rooms (unless you want to be so pulled). Also keep in mind that taking pictures here is a no-no—if you violate the rule your camera may be grabbed from you and broken.

Paulus Potterstraat 13 (at Museumplein). ✆ **020/573-2737.** Admission 5€ ($5.75) adults, 2.50€ ($2.90) students and seniors, free for children under 7. Daily 11am–5pm.

Van Gogh Museum This museum houses the largest collection of Vincent van Gogh's work in the world, with more than 200 paintings and 600 drawings in the permanent collection. Notable works include *The Potato Eaters, Self Portrait as a Painter, Still Life with Sun Flowers,* and *Cornfield with Rows.* Exhibitions also feature paintings by other notable Dutch artists as well as van Gogh's contemporaries, including Gauguin, Monet, and Toulouse-Lautrec.

Paulus Potterstraat 7 (at Museumplein). ✆ **020/570-5200.** Admission about 7€ ($8.05) adults, 2.50€ ($2.90) students, free for children under 13. Daily 10am–6pm.

LOCAL FLAVORS

The restaurant choices here span the international spectrum. A favorite is the **Indonesian rijstafel** (a sampling of various dishes). Distinctive Dutch dishes include white asparagus (in season in May), raw herring (in May or early June), and Zeeland oysters and mussels (in Sept). You can enjoy your meal with the local brew, Heineken. You'll see people on the street (in shopping areas) eating french fries and mayonnaise. It's a local treat that sounds gross but is really very good—just make sure you spend some time in your ship's gym afterward to work off the calories.

BEST BUYS

Best buys here include Delft pottery, wooden shoes, cheese, antiques, and diamonds. Main shopping streets (many pedestrian-only) are **Kalverstraat** near Dam Square (for inexpensive items); **Rokin,** parallel to the above (for quality fashions, art, and antiques); **Leidsestraat** (for upscale clothing, china, and gifts); **P. C. Hooftstraat** and **Van Baerlestraat,** near Museumplein (for hip fashion and gifts); and **Nieuwe Spiegelstraat,** near the Rijksmuseum (for antiques). **De Bijenkorf,** at Dam Square, is a top department store. If you're flying out of Holland, keep in mind the Amsterdam airport has some of the best duty-free shopping you'll find anywhere.

If you're in the market for diamonds, the following are members of the Amsterdam Diamond Foundation, and offer both showrooms and diamond-cutting and polishing demonstrations: **Amsterdam Diamond Center,** Rokin 1 (✆ **020/624-5787**); **Coster Diamonds,** Paulus Potterstraat 204 (✆ **020/676-2222**); **Gassan Diamonds,** Nieuwe Uilenburgerstraat 173–175 (✆ **020/622-5333**); **Stoeltie Diamonds,** Wagenstraat 13–17 (✆ **020/623-7601**); and **Van Moppes Diamonds,** Albert Cuypstraat 2–6 (✆ **020/676-1242**).

ROTTERDAM

A bustling metropolis and a major port city, Rotterdam is sometimes called "the gateway to Europe." The city is close to major Holland tourist attractions including the Hague (½ hr.), Amsterdam (1 hr.), and the historic cheese town of Gouda (½ hr.), which you can visit on a shore excursion.

Only one tiny area of Rotterdam, Delfshaven, retains its historic structures (as well as museums and art galleries). Elsewhere, big, well-designed modern buildings have taken the place of those destroyed during World War II.

Of special interest to Americans in Delfshaven is the old church in which the Pilgrims said their last prayers before boarding the *Speedwell* to the New World in 1620. When the ship did not prove seaworthy, they switched to the *Mayflower* at Southampton. The city's museums include Boijmans–Van Beuningen, an outstanding collection of ancient and modern art and design work.

The old Holland America Line passenger terminal on Wilhelmina Quay has been completely renovated and serves as the city's cruise terminal. Located in the heart of the city near the new Erasmus Bridge and only a 10-minute walk from the city center, it's a tourist destination all its own.

FROMMER'S FAVORITE ROTTERDAM EXPERIENCES

- **Taking a harbor boat ride.** Spido Havenrondvaarten, on Willemsplein (✆ **010/413-5400**), offers 1-hour cruises with fascinating narration for about 9.25€ ($8.40) per person.
- **Stopping by the Pilgrim Fathers Church.** This church (on Voorhaven) is where the pilgrims said goodbye to the Old World before heading off to the New.
- **Going museum hopping.** The Maritime Museum and Museum Boijmans–Van Beuningen art museum both merit a look.

COMING ASHORE & GETTING AROUND It's about a 10-minute walk to the city center. **Taxis** are available at the pier, but are expensive. Rotterdam also has an extensive public transportation network of **buses, trams,** and **subways** (Metro).

THE BEST SHORE EXCURSIONS

Ships dock in Rotterdam as an alternative to Amsterdam, so shore excursions are also offered to Amsterdam, the Hague, Delft, and other locations described in the Amsterdam section, above.

Rotterdam City & Harbor Tour (3 hr.; $46): From the bus, view both the city's acclaimed modern architecture and historic landmarks. Then take a harbor cruise of the busy port.

Zeeland & The Delta (5 hr.; $54): In 1953, the Province of Zeeland was the scene of a major flood that covered more than 104,000 hectares (260,000 acres), killing nearly 1,900 people. As a result of the disaster, water management techniques were developed to reclaim the land. Dams, canals, and dikes were constructed along with a storm surge barrier. The massive project actually shortened Holland's shoreline by more than 483km (300 miles). Visit the Delta Expo for an explanation of the fascinating hydro-engineering project. On the way, you'll pass scenic countryside and the historic city of Zierrikzee.

Gouda & Oudewater (5 hr.; $48): Gouda, about half an hour from Rotterdam, is best known for producing cheese. This tour brings you to town for a walking tour that visits the market, the Gothic town hall (the oldest in the Netherlands), and the weighing house, which dates back to the 17th century. You then reboard the bus to travel to Oudewater, where you'll visit the Witches Weighing House, the only remaining such place in Holland. Last used in 1729, this is where people were weighed to determine if they were witches.

THE TOP ATTRACTIONS

Harbor Cruise Get to see more of Rotterdam's port by taking a scenic cruise. The season of the year determines how much of the vast port you're able to view, but it's an unforgettable experience. You feel dwarfed by the hulking oil tankers and container ships that glide like giant whales into their berths along the miles of docks. The basic tour of the city's waterfront takes 75 minutes. In spring and summer there's also an extended tour that takes about 2¼ hours.

Railway
0 0.2 mi
0 0.2 km
Amsterdam
NETHERLANDS
Rotterdam
Harbor boats 5
Museum Boijmans-
Van Beuningen 2
Old Holland America Terminal 4
Pilgrim Fathers Church 1
Prins Hendrik Maritime Museum 3
Maas
Nieuwe
Leuvehaven
Willemsplein
Erasmusbrug
Veerhaven
Westplein
Park
Parkhaven
Coolhaven
DELFSHAVEN
Voorhaven
Meeuwenstr.
Sleephellingstr.
Thorbeckestr.
Prins Hendrikkade
Maaskade
Verlengde Willemsbrug
Keizerstraat
Schiedamsedijk
Vasteland
Zalmstr.
Westmaasstr.
Veerkade
Veerhaven
Westmaaslaan
Van Vollenhovenstraat
Zalmhaven
Houtlaan
Willemskade
Schiedamse Vest
Schilderstr.
Churchillplein
Binnenwegplein
Karel Doormanstr.
Mauritsstr.
Mauritsweg
Westersingel
Eendrachtsplein
Eendrachtsweg
Eendrachtsstr.
Boomgaardsstraat
Melkkopad
Jongkindstr.
Hobokenplein
Gouvernestraat
Rodenburgstraat
Wytemaweg
Dr. Molewaterplein
Burg. Jacobplein
Saftlevenstr.
Oostzeedwarsstraat
Straalmolenstr.
Mathenesserlaan
Nieuwe Binnenweg
Nieuwe Beninnenstraat
Josephstraat
Gatteliestraat
Van Speykstraat
Adrianastraat
Bajonetstraat
Graverdijkwal
Ardianaplein
Middelplein
Claes de Vrieselaan
Joost van Geelstr.
Hendrick Sorchstr.
vander Poelstr.
Heemraadssingel
Heemraadsplein
Schonebergerweg
Nieuwe Binnenweg
Rochussenstraat
Schietbaanlaan
Robert Fruinstr.
Mathenesserlaan
Volmarijnstraat
Hornbuisstraat
Pieter de Hoochweg
Willem Buytewechstraat
Puntegaalstr.
Dunantstr.
Lloydstr.
Alexanderstr.
Bellevoysstraat
Schermlaan
Kogelvangerstr.
Scheepmakersstraat
Glashaven
Wijnhaven
Wijnstraat
Wijnhaven
Wijnhaven
Wijnhaven

From Spido Rondvaarten, Leuvehaven ✆ **010/275-9988.** Departures for the basic tours are Apr–Sept daily every 30 to 45 min. from 9:30am to 5pm; Oct–Mar two or four times a day. The extended tour runs Apr–Sept, at 10am and 12:30pm. Prices begin at 7.75€ ($8.90) for adults, 4.75€ ($5.50) for children ages 4 to 11, and free for children under 4.

Maritime Museum Rotterdam Devoted to the history of Rotterdam harbor, this museum is full of nautical lore. Located in the harbor area, it consists of a main building and *De Buffel,* a beautifully restored 1868 warship.

Leuvehaven 1. ✆ **010/413-2680.** Admission about 3.50€ ($4) adults, 2€ ($2.30) children, under 4 free. Tues–Sat 10am–5pm; Sun and public holidays 11am–5pm.

Museum Boijmans–Van Beuningen Dutch and Flemish artists from the 16th and 17th centuries are featured here, including Rubens, Hals, Rembrandt, and Steen. Separate galleries boast international modern art, applied arts, ceramics, and sculpture. There are also regular exhibitions of the museum's extensive collection of drawings and prints. The museum has recently been renovated.

Museumpark 18–20. ✆ **010/441-9400.** Admission 8€ ($9.20) adults, 4€ ($4.60) children. Tues–Sat 10am–5pm; Sun and holidays 11am–5pm.

LOCAL FLAVORS

Favorites here include raw herring and *jenever* (Dutch gin). **Henkes' Brasserie,** Voorhaven 17 (✆ **010/425-5596**), is a great place to enjoy the wonderful atmosphere of old Delfshaven. The interior, formerly Henkes' Jenever, has been transformed into a beautiful dining room.

BEST BUYS

Head to Delfshaven for galleries and craft shops. The central shopping area is called the Beurstraverse.

10 Norway

Norway offers visitors an embarrassment of riches, from majestic glacier-born fjords and mountain views, to charming and remote towns and villages, to summer's Midnight Sun. Both seafaring and tradition are important parts of what this natural frontier is all about—Norway's name is even nautical, deriving from *Norvegr,* a 1,000-year-old Viking term meaning "the way north," describing the shipping route along the Norwegian coast. But Norway is also a modern and technologically advanced nation with a well-educated and amazingly athletic populace—where else does nearly every child learn to ski?

CURRENCY The Norwegian currency is the krone (plural kroner), and there are 100 øre in 1 krone. Banknotes are issued in denominations of 50, 100, 200, 500, and 1,000 kroner. The exchange rate at press time was $1 = 7.07NOK.

LANGUAGE Norwegian. English is also widely spoken.

BERGEN

The capital of Norway's fjord district, Bergen is the largest city on the west coast, an area known for its awesome natural beauty. Nearly 1,000 years old, the city is squeezed between mountain ranges and the sea. Until the 14th century it was the seat of the medieval kingdom of Norway. Today, it's a commercial capital, but it's also a town with important traditions, including in shipping. Besides being a starting-off point for exploration, Bergen has its own sightseeing attractions, including the historic medieval district of **Bryggen,** which is on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

FROMMER'S FAVORITE BERGEN EXPERIENCES

- **Visiting Bryggen.** This quarter of historic timbered houses, rebuilt on the waterfront after a disastrous fire in 1702, is what remains of medieval Bergen. The buildings (some open to the public) now house workshops of painters, weavers, and craftspeople. Bryggen is on the UNESCO World Heritage List as one of the world's most significant cultural and historical re-creations of a medieval settlement.
- **Taking the Fløibanen funicular to Fløien.** The view is worth every øre.

COMING ASHORE & GETTING AROUND Ships dock within walking distance of the city center. **Taxis** are available at the pier, but you can easily explore the city on foot.

THE BEST SHORE EXCURSIONS

Bergen City Highlights & Troldhaugen (3 hr.; $40–$49): Drive past the historic row houses and other city sights, then visit Troldhaugen, a Victorian house in the countryside outside of Bergen that was the home of Norway's famous composer Edvard Grieg. The house contains Grieg's furniture, paintings, and other mementos, and it was here that he composed many of his famous works. The tour may also include a piano recital at the nearby turf-roofed Concert Hall.

Hiking Mount Fløien (4½ hr.; $42): Stroll with a guide along Bergen's historic waterfront and wharfs to the Fløibanen Funicular (see below). Take the 8-minute ride to the top then walk along gravel paths above the city. The route travels through hilly woodside to Lake Skomakerdiket and continues uphill to view the fjord and its many islands. Weather-permitting, ascend to the city's highest point at 540m (1,800 ft.). The hike is about 4.8km (3 miles) total, and you climb about 240m (800 ft.) on foot (being physically fit is a good idea).

THE TOP ATTRACTIONS

Bergen Aquarium One of the largest and nicest aquariums in Scandinavia, it features seals, penguins, and piranhas. An especially popular attraction is seal and penguin feeding time (they eat daily in the summer at 11am, 2pm, and 6pm; in the winter, daily at noon and 4pm).

Nornesbakken 4. ✆ **55/55-71-71.** Admission 80NOK ($11) adults, 50NOK ($7) children. May–Sept daily 9am–8pm; Oct–Apr daily 10am–6pm.

Bergen Art Museum The works of Norwegian and international artists—among them Picasso, Braque, Miró, Kandinsky, and Paul Klee—are displayed at this museum in the city center. The museum also contains some of Edvard Munch's most important works.

Rasmus Meyers Allé 3–7. ✆ **55-56-80-00.** Admission 50NOK ($7) adults, 30NOK ($4.25) students, free for children up to age 16. May 15–Sept 15 daily 11am–5pm; Sept 16–May 14 Tues–Sun 11am–5pm.

Fløibanen Funicular A short walk from the fish market, the funicular heads up Fløien, the most famous of Bergen's seven hills, from which you can view the city, the neighboring hills, and the harbor. The ride takes about 8 minutes in each direction.

Vetrlidsalm 23A. ✆ **55/31-48-00.** Round-trip ride 40NOK ($5.65) adults, 20NOK ($2.85) children. Late May to Aug Mon–Fri 7:30am–midnight, Sat 8am–midnight, Sun 9am–midnight; Sept to late May Mon–Thurs 8am–11pm, Fri–Sat 8am–11:30pm, Sun 9am–11pm.

Det Hanseatiske Museum Housed in one of the best-preserved wooden buildings at Bryggen, the museum illustrates what life was like on the wharf centuries ago. The museum is furnished with authentic articles dating from 1704.

Finnegårdsgaten 1A, Bryggen. ✆ **55-31-41-89**. Admission May–Sept 40NOK ($5.65) adults, Oct–Apr 25NOK ($3.50) adults, free for children. Open daily: June–Aug 10am–5pm; Oct–Apr 10am–5pm; May and Sept 11am–2pm.

LOCAL FLAVORS

Traditional favorites include fish (especially smoked salmon or *laks*) and game dishes (including reindeer). Nice cafes can be found near the harbor.

BEST BUYS

Head to the **Marketplace** (Torget) for bargains on local handicrafts from the western fjord district, including rugs and handmade tablecloths. The best time to visit is between 8am and noon. Bargaining is welcomed. The most important shopping complex in the city is **Galleriet** (Torgalmenningen 8), located near the fish market. Here you'll find 70-some stores offering tax-free shopping, with good buys on hand-knit Norwegian sweaters.

THE NORWEGIAN FJORDS

As you explore the Norwegian fjords on a **North Cape cruise,** you will make several port calls. Following are two of our favorites.

HAMMERFEST

Located well above the Arctic Circle and subject to long, dark winters, Hammerfest bought a generator from Thomas Edison in 1891 and became the first European town with electric streetlights. Much of the town was destroyed during World War II, and it is today a modern port with nice shops catering to tourists on their way to the North Cape.

In the basement of the town hall is the **Royal and Ancient Polar Bear Society** (✆ **78-41-31-00**). Stop by and become a member for 150NOK ($21). The money is used to protect endangered Arctic animals. There's also a small museum. The center is open June to August, Monday to Friday 10am to 5pm, Saturday and Sunday 9am to 5pm.

THE BEST SHORE EXCURSIONS

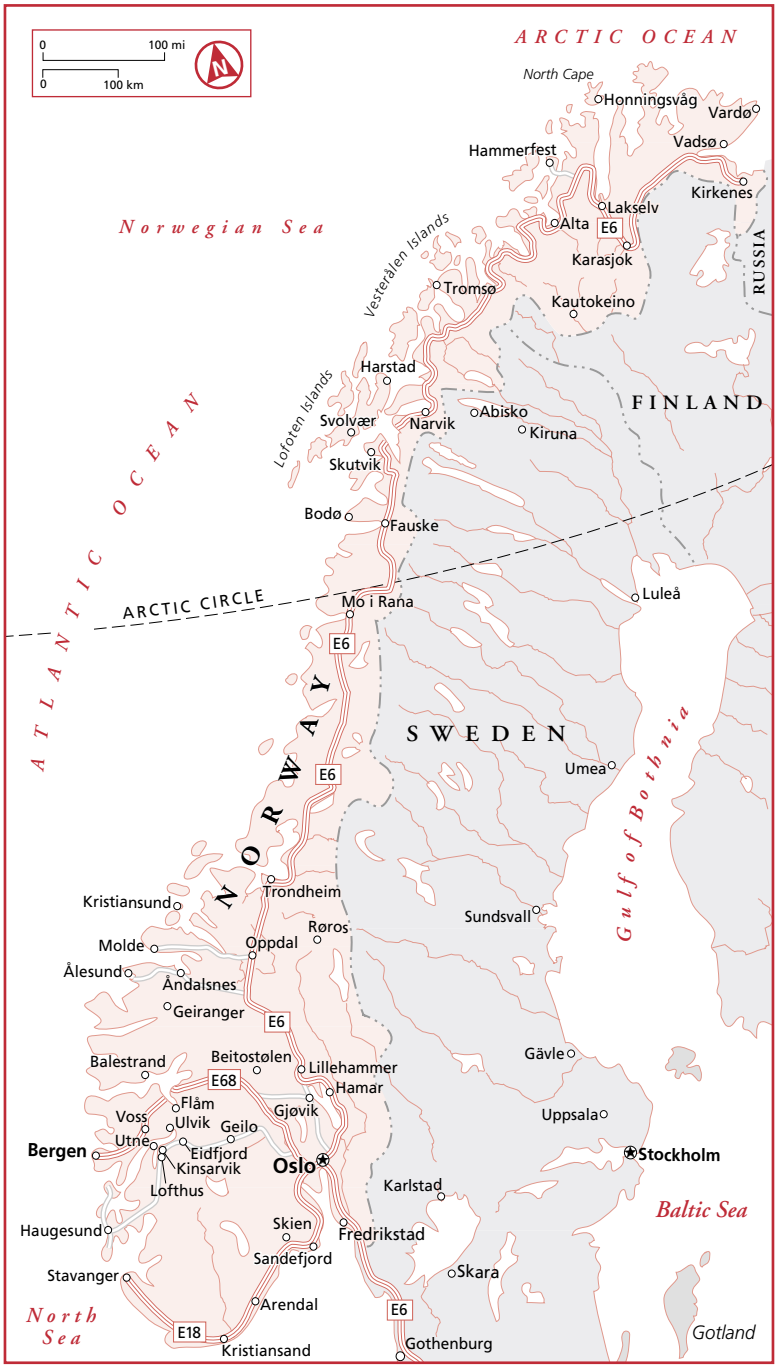
Arctic Fishing (3 hr.; $58): A typical fishing boat will take you about an hour outside of town, where you'll find so much cod, catfish, and other fish you're almost guaranteed to catch something. Ask the chef on your ship if he or she will prepare your catch for dinner.

HONNINGSVAG

This is the world's northernmost village, and gateway to the North Cape. It is a completely modern fishing harbor—only the chapel withstood the German destruction of 1944. Located right at the harbor, a museum called **Nordkappmuseet,** in the Nordkapphuset, Fergeveien 4 (✆ **78/47-28-33**), offers exhibits relating to the cultural history of the North Cape. (Admission is 25NOK/$3.50 adults, 5NOK/60¢ children, free for children under age 6. Hours June 15–Aug 15 are Mon–Sat 9am–8pm, Sun 1–8pm. At other times, Mon–Fri 12:30–4pm.) But we most recommend you take the shore excursion to the North Cape (see below).

THE BEST SHORE EXCURSIONS

The North Cape (3½ hr.; $65–$76): Drive about 45 minutes to the Nordkapp, the actual northernmost point in Europe. Here the Nordkapphallen visitor center offers a video presentation and museum exhibits on the history of the North Cape, including a visit by King Oscar (king of Norway and Sweden) in 1873,


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ARCTIC OCEAN
North Cape
Honningsvåg
Vardø
Vadsø
Hammerfest
Kirkenes
Lakselv
Alta
E6
Karasjok
RUSSIA
Norwegian Sea
Vesterålen Islands
Tromsø
Kautokeino
Harstad
Lofoten Islands
Svolvær
Narvik
Abisko
FINLAND
Kiruna
Skutvik
Bodø
Fauske
ATLANTIC OCEAN
ARCTIC CIRCLE
Mo i Rana
Luleå
E6
NORWAY
SWEDEN
Umea
E6
Gulf of Bothnia
Trondheim
Kristiansund
Sundsvall
Røros
Molde
Oppdal
Ålesund
Åndalsnes
Geiranger
E6
Gävle
Balestrand
Beitostølen
Lillehammer
E68
Hamar
Flåm
Gjøvik
Voss
Ulvik
Geilo
Uppsala
Utne
Bergen
Eidfjord
Kinsarvik
Oslo
Stockholm
Lofthus
Karlstad
Baltic Sea
Haugesund
Skien
Fredrikstad
Sandefjord
Stavanger
Skara
Arendal
North Sea
E18
E6
Kristiansand
Gothenburg
Gotland

and the arrival of King Chulalongkorn of Siam (now Thailand) in 1907. Stop by the post office for a Nordkapp postmark. And if it's not foggy (as it was on our recent visit), check out the incredible sea views from the top of the world (or at least the top of Europe). The main attraction here is Mother Nature, but the center also has a huge gift shop.

TROMSØ

This "Gateway to the Arctic" island has long been a starting-off point for exploration of the North Pole. The capital of Norwegian Lapland, it's popular with summer tourists who come to celebrate the midnight sun. Local sights include the **Arctic Cathedral,** built in the shape of an iceberg. **Polaria,** Hjalmar Johansengst 12 (✆ **77-75-01-00**), is a seaside adventure center with a Polar and Barents Region theme—the building itself is shaped like ice floes. Inside, visitors enjoy a wide-screen video presentation as well as an aquarium with seal and sea life exhibits. Admission is 70NOK ($9.90) adults, 35NOK ($4.95) children. The attraction is open May to August, 10am to 7pm, and September to April, noon to 5pm. Another key Tromsø attraction is **Nordlysplanetariet,** the world's most northernmost planetarium.

THE BEST SHORE EXCURSIONS

Tromsø City Tour (3 hr.; $49–$59): This tour includes the Tromsø Museum, which offers zoology, geology, cultural history, and botany displays and a special exhibit on the Sami, the region's original inhabitants. Also visited are the Arctic Cathedral and Polaria.

TRONDHEIM

Founded by the Viking king Olaf I Tryggvason in the 10th century, Trondheim served as the country's capital until the early 1200s, and is today Norway's third largest city. Scenic and an active university town, it's noted for its timbered architecture and links to its medieval past, which include the Gothic-style **Nidaros Cathedral** and **Archbishop's Palace,** Bispegaten 5 (✆ **73/50-12-12**). Admission to both is 35NOK ($4.95) adults, 20NOK ($2.85) children. The cathedral is open June 20 to August 18 Monday to Friday 9am to 6pm, Saturday 9am to 2pm, and Sunday 1 to 4pm (closes earlier other times of the year). The palace is open June to mid-August only, Monday to Friday 9am to 3pm, Saturday 9am to 2pm, and Sunday noon to 3pm.

THE BEST SHORE EXCURSIONS

City Tour with Open-Air Folk Museum (3 hr.; $49): This tour visits the Nidaros Cathedral as well as the Trøndelag Folk Museum, one of Norway's major folk-culture complexes. The collection includes farmhouses, churches (including the northernmost stave church in Norway), and town buildings, surrounded by a nature park.

OSLO

Founded in the mid–11th century by a Viking king, Oslo was named as the nation's capital around 1300. Though it's never been on the mainstream tourism circuit, Oslo is a growing city permeated by a kind of Nordic joie de vivre, and offers a wealth of sights and activities plus new restaurants, cafes, and shopping options. It's also a starting point for easy excursions along the 97km (60-mile) long Oslofjord or to nearby towns and villages.

Oslo residents love nature and are proud of the nearby forests and fjords. It takes only a half-hour by tram to get from the Royal Palace, at Drammensveien 1, to **Tryvannstårnet Lookout Tower,** where you can enjoy the lushness of Oslo Marka, the giant forest. From the 117m (390-ft.) tower itself, you can look down onto hundreds of sailboats, motorboats, and windsurfers among the numerous islands and fjords of the Oslo archipelago. For information, phone ✆ **22/14-67-11.** Admission is about 35NOK ($4.95) adults, 20NOK ($2.85) children. Hours are May and September, daily 10am to 5pm; June, 10am to 7pm; July, 9am to 10pm; August, 9am to 8pm. Nearby is the **Holmenkollen Ski Jump,** the site of Olympic competitions in 1952, worth looking at if for no other reason than to see how crazy ski jumpers really are (it's tall!).

FROMMER'S FAVORITE OSLO EXPERIENCES

- **Taking a ferry to the Bygdøy Peninsula.** This is where some of Oslo's major attractions, including the Viking Ship Museum, polar ship *Fram,* and Norwegian Folk Museum, are located.
- **Admiring outdoor sculptures** at the Vigeland Sculpture Park.
- **Exploring the Edvard Munch Museum.** But don't Scream!
- **Enjoying the street musicians.** They flock here by the hundreds in the summer, and can be found along Karl Johans Gate or at the marketplace.
- **Eating a bag of shrimp on the harbor.** See "Local Flavors," below.

COMING ASHORE & GETTING AROUND Ships dock right in the city center, which is small, compact, and easy to walk around. **Taxis** may be difficult to come by. The city, however, has an efficient system of **buses, trams** (streetcars), and **subways.**

THE BEST SHORE EXCURSIONS

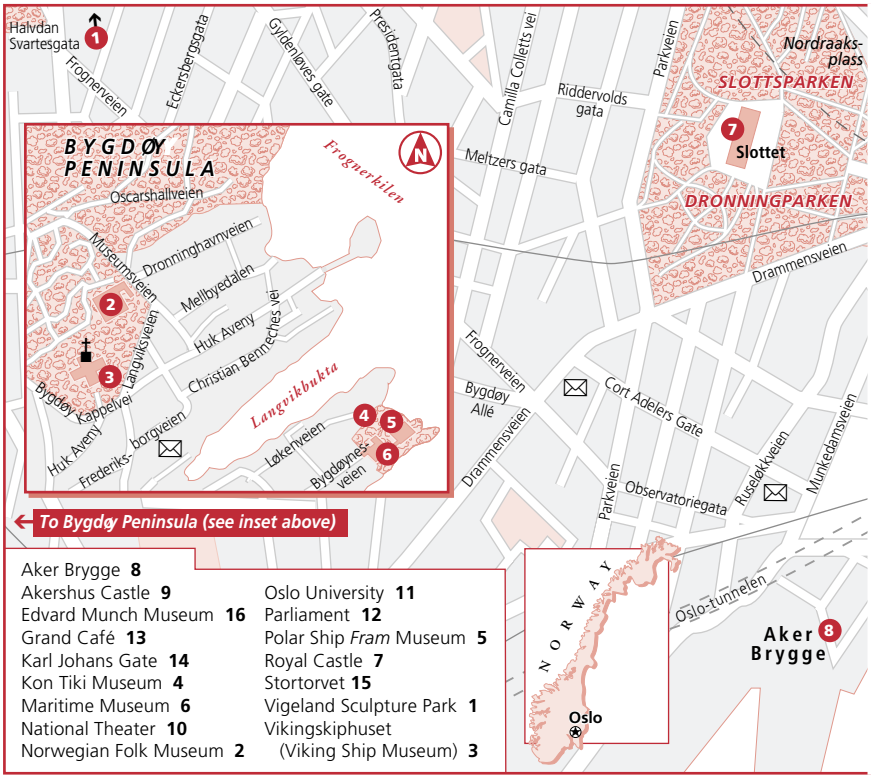
Oslo Highlights (3 hr.; $45–$49): Drive through the capital, passing Akershus Castle, the Parliament building, the National Theater, the university, the Royal Castle, and Karl Johan Street, Oslo's main thoroughfare. Continue on through beautiful residential areas to Holmenkollen Ski Jump. Visit Vigeland Sculpture Park for a walking tour, then head to Bygdøy Peninsula, a former royal preserve, now the site of important museums including the Viking Ship Museum.

Maritime Oslo (4 hr.; $49–$56): A city tour with stops at the Fram Museum, featuring a polar ship; the Maritime Museum, offering a video presentation with spectacular views of Norway's coastline and a depiction of life on the high seas; and the Viking Ship Museum. May also include a visit to Vigeland Sculpture Park (see "The Top Attractions," below).

Hiking the Nordmarka Forest (4½ hr.; $52): Walk to the subway station (about 10 min.) for a 25-minute ride with a guide to the Hollemnkollen area, popular with locals (who love nature). Hike about 2.4km (1½ miles) uphill to the Tryvann Observation Tower. Ride an elevator to the top deck for views of the vast Nordmarka Forest. Hike about 10km (2½ miles) downhill to Tryvann Lake, and back to the subway.

THE TOP ATTRACTIONS

Edvard Munch Museum This museum is devoted exclusively to the works of Edvard Munch (1863–1944), Scandinavia's leading painter and creator of *The Scream.* The artist's gift to the city, the collection contains some 1,100 paintings, 4,500 drawings, and 18,000 prints, plus graphic plates, sculptures, and documentary material. Exhibits change periodically.



Aker Brygge **8**
Akershus Castle **9**
Edvard Munch Museum **16**
Grand Café **13**
Karl Johans Gate **14**
Kon Tiki Museum **4**
Maritime Museum **6**
National Theater **10**
Norwegian Folk Museum **2**
Oslo University **11**
Parliament **12**
Polar Ship *Fram* Museum **5**
Royal Castle **7**
Stortorvet **15**
Vigeland Sculpture Park **1**
Vikingskiphuset (Viking Ship Museum) **3**

Tøyengate 53. ✆ **23/24-14-00.** Admission 60NOK ($8.50) adults, 30NOK ($4.25) children. June to mid-Sept daily 10am–6pm; mid-Sept to May Tues–Fri 10am–4pm, Sat–Sun 11am–5pm.

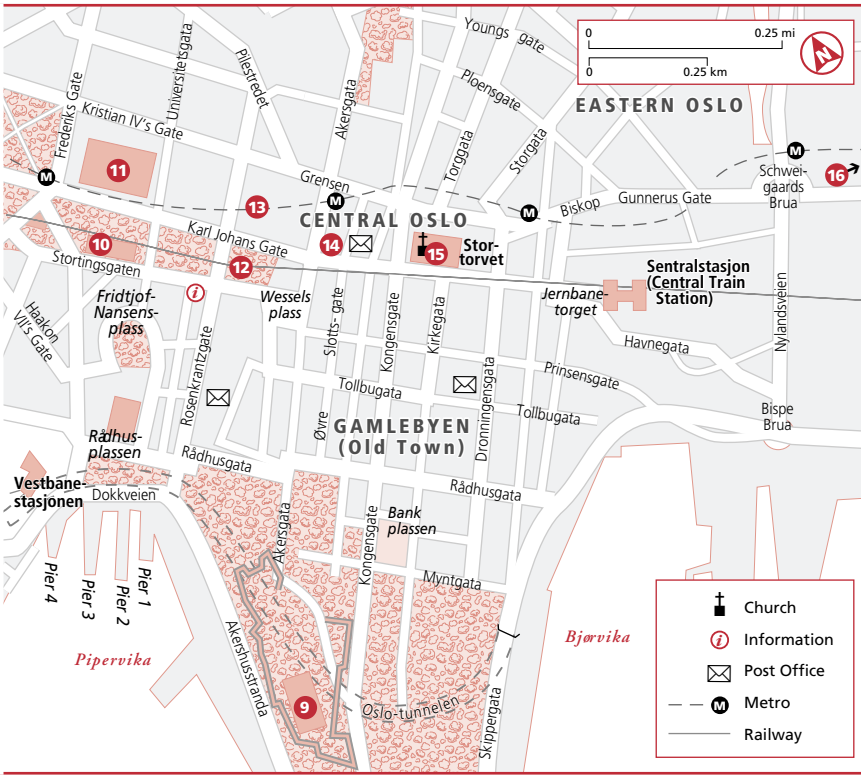
Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter (Henie-Onstad Art Center) This museum on the Oslofjord, about 11km (7 miles) west of Oslo, displays the art collection of skating champion Sonja Henie and her husband, Niels Onstad, a shipping tycoon. There are some 1,800 works by Munch, Picasso, Matisse, Léger, Bonnard, and Miró. Also on display are Miss Henie's three Olympic gold medals and other trophies. There's also a top-notch, partly self-service grill restaurant, The Piruetten, on the premises.

Høkvikodden, Baerum. ✆ **67/80-48-80.** Admission 60NOK ($8.50) adults, 40NOK ($5.65) children 16 and under. Tues–Thurs 11am–7pm; Fri–Mon 11am–6pm. Take a bus to Høvikodden.

***Kon Tiki* Museum** *Kon Tiki* was the flimsy balsa raft on which intrepid Norwegian explorer Thor Heyerdahl and five companions sailed 6,923km (4,300 miles) across open seas from Peru to Polynesia. Why? To prove a theory that it might have been done centuries ago.

Bygdoynesveien 36. ✆ **23-08-67-67.** Admission 35NOK ($4.95) adults, 25NOK ($3.50) students, 20NOK ($2.85) children, 80NOK ($9) for family ticket for 4. Apr–May and Sept 10:30am–5pm; June–Aug 9:30am–5:45pm; Oct–Mar 10:30am–4pm.

Norwegian Folk Museum This open-air museum features 140 original buildings, transported here from all over Norway. Included are medieval



dwellings, a stave church, and rural structures grouped by region of origin. Inside, exhibits capture every facet of Norwegian life past and present, including an outstanding presentation on Norway's Lapp population.

Museumsveien 10. ✆ **22/12-37-00.** Admission 75NOK ($11) adults, 20NOK ($2.85) children, under 6 free. Reduced admission Oct–Apr. May–Sept Mon–Fri 11am–6pm, Sat and Sun 10am–6pm; Jan–May and mid-Sept to Dec Mon–Fri 11am–3pm and Sat and Sun 11am–4pm.

Vigeland Sculpture Park This 30-hectare (75-acre) park displays the works of Gustav Vigeland, Norway's greatest sculptor. There are some 211 sculptures of humans and animals in stone, bronze, and iron. The nearby museum is the sculptor's former studio, and contains more of his works, sketches, and woodcuts.

Frogner Park, Nobelsgate 32. ✆ **22/54-25-30.** Free admission to the park; museum 40NOK ($5.65) adults, 20NOK ($2.85) students and seniors. Park daily 24 hr. Museum May–Sept Tues–Sat 10am–6pm, Sun noon–6pm; Oct–Mar, Tues–Sun noon–4pm.

Vikingskiphuset (Viking Ship Museum) On display here are three Viking burial vessels that were found preserved in clay on the shores of the Oslofjord. The most spectacular is the 9th-century dragon ship, which features a wealth of ornaments and was the burial chamber of a Viking queen and her slave.

Huk Aveny 25, Bygdøy. ✆ **22/13-52-80.** Admission about 40NOK ($5.65) adults, 20NOK ($2.85) children, under 7 free. May–Sept 9am–6pm; Oct–Apr 11am–4pm. Take a ferry from Pier 3, facing the Rådhuset, or hop a city bus.

LOCAL FLAVORS

At the harbor, in front of the Rådhuset, you can buy a bag of freshly caught and cooked **shrimp** from a fisherman and shell your meal as you check out the harbor scenery. Those looking for smart restaurants serving Norwegian food and foreign food (especially American) should also head to the waterfront, in particular **Aker Brygge,** the former shipbuilding yard, now a restaurant and shopping complex. The **Grand Café** in the Grand Hotel, Karl Johans Gate 31 (✆ **22/42-93-90**), is where Edvard Munch and Henrik Ibsen used to hang out (reservations are recommended).

BEST BUYS

Though Oslo is one of the most expensive cities in Europe, best buys here include sportswear, silver, enamelware, traditional handicrafts, pewter, glassware, teak furniture, and products made of stainless steel. Oslo has many pedestrian streets for shoppers. A good place to start is the **Stortorvet.** Another large cluster of stores can be found along **Karl Johans Gate.** For sweaters, try the shop at the SAS Radisson hotel, where they have been known to negotiate (especially if you are buying more than one).

11 Russia

Founded in 1703 and named for Peter the Great, St. Petersburg in the 20th century was marked by trauma and bloodshed. The 1917 Russian Revolution that ushered in the Soviet era also bestowed a new name on the city: Leningrad, in honor of Vladimir Lenin. In the early 1940s, Nazi troops lay siege to Leningrad for 900 days during World War II, leaving approximately a million dead and the city badly battered.

In 1991, the city returned to its original name under the new non-communist Russian government. Today, the one-time capital of Imperial Russia is a cosmopolitan city of five million that's both an industrial and a cultural center. The second-largest city in Russia, it's also the country's largest port. But signs of age and warfare are obvious at close range. The walls of many buildings that seem architecturally appealing from afar look tattered and worn when viewed close up, with graffiti stains and blistered paint. Putting this gorgeous city in order is going to take determination—and lots of cash.

The Neva River cuts through the city, which was once swampland. Some 360 bridges cross the river and canals, a layout that's earned the city the nickname "Venice of the North." The canals are lined with baroque and neoclassical palaces, cathedrals, and monuments. The city's restoration project requires that all existing facades in the downtown area be retained.

Top sights in St. Petersburg include the Hermitage museum, which has one of the richest art collections in the world; the Peter and Paul fortress, the burial place of the Romanov dynasty; and St. Isaac's Cathedral, the fourth largest cathedral in the world. Outside the city, you can visit the lavish summer homes of the czars.

Cruise lines also typically offer nighttime shore excursions here to see ballet, opera, folk performances, or a circus.

CURRENCY Rubles, but street vendors will readily accept dollars. The rate of exchange at press time was $1 = 29 rubles.

LANGUAGE Russian.





Peter the Great Statue/Senate Square **10**
Cathedral area market **5**
Church of the Spilled Blood **5**
Cruiser *Aurora* **2**
Grand Hotel Europe **7**
Nevsky Prospekt **6**
Peter and Paul fortress **3**
Smolny Convent **1**
St. Isaac's Cathedral **9**
St. Isaac's Square **9**
Summer Palace **4**
Winter Palace/Hermitage Museum **8**

Tips Important Visa Information

Passengers who participate in St. Petersburg shore excursions or arrange for private transportation through the ship's shore excursions desk (see "Coming Ashore & Getting Around," below) do not need to obtain a visa.

Those who wish to go ashore on their own, however, do have to obtain a tourist visa prior to departure. To receive a Russian visa, you must have a valid passport that remains valid at least 30 days past the last day of the cruise. Visa application forms are available from the Russian consulates in Washington, New York, San Francisco, or Seattle, or from travel agencies or visa services. The visa processing fee is $70 for not less than 2 weeks' processing time. Additional fees are charged for quicker processing.

For information, contact the **Embassy of the Russian Federation in the United States** (✆ **202/939-8913** or 202/939-8918; http://russianembassy.org), open Monday through Friday, 9am to 1pm and 2:30 to 6pm. But take our advice: You are better off taking the visa-less shore excursion.

FROMMER'S FAVORITE ST. PETERSBURG EXPERIENCES

- **The Hermitage** wins hands down. Even though the building itself is one of those that could do with a face-lift, what's inside is memorable. And you needn't be an art snob to appreciate the beauty of the exhibits.
- **Strolling the Nevsky Prospekt.** St. Petersburg's main thoroughfare (and the most famous street in Russia) offers historic squares, bridges, buildings, shopping, cafes, crowds, and even the occasional scam artist and black marketeer (don't buy anything from someone who starts the conversation with "Pssst . . .").
- **Visiting a summer palace.** These historic estates of the czars are lavish and memorable.

COMING ASHORE & GETTING AROUND The main cruise terminal is about a 20-minute drive from the city center. Small ships can come right into town up the Neva River, but you are still best off taking a **taxi,** especially at night. Official taxis are usually four-door Volvo sedans. In Russia, they also have what are known as "private" taxis. "Private," in this case, means virtually anyone can stop and pick you up, and you enter these cabs at your own risk (there have been robberies). If you want to tour the city without having to join a shore excursion, you are best off hiring a car, limo, or van with a **private guide.** Your cruise line shore excursion desk will be able to arrange this for you. Private cars with guide carry four passengers and run about 10,875 rubles ($375) for a half-day, 20,300 rubles ($700) for a full-day. Vans may also be available for bigger groups (you can get several couples together and save).

THE BEST SHORE EXCURSIONS

In addition to excursions to St. Petersburg, the cruise line may also offer day trips to Moscow. The tours, including round-trip flights, run from about $615–$675 per person.

City Tour (3–3½ hr.; $40–$55): This introductory tour includes a view of the Peter and Paul Fortress with its gilded spire; the cruiser *Aurora,* the ship that fired a blank round in 1917 that signaled the start of the October Revolution; and the Winter Palace, which houses the Hermitage. You will see the famous Bronze Horseman statue depicting the city's founder, Peter the Great; the exquisitely decorated Church of the Spilled Blood; and the magnificent St. Isaac's Cathedral, one of the world's largest domed structures (it took 40 years to construct and was used as a museum under the Soviet regime; it's now an active church again). Some tours include a stop at 18th-century Smolny Convent, a crowning achievement of the renowned architect Rastrelli. Others include a stop at the Summer Palace, a beautiful example of 18th-century architecture.

The Hermitage (3½-4 hr.; $56–$76): Take a short drive along the banks of the Neva River to the Winter Palace for a guided tour through parts of the vast Hermitage Art Museum. The former home of the imperial family, this 18th-century baroque palace and four adjacent buildings now house one of the most outstanding art collections in the world.

Peterhof (4 hr.; $50–$60): Drive 35km (22 miles) through the suburbs of St. Petersburg to Peterhof, the former summer home of Peter the Great, built to rival Versailles. Construction began 300 years ago and spanned 2 centuries. The massive estate encompasses seven parks and more than 20 smaller palaces and pavilions. Your guided tour will include the grand staircase and a walk through some of the palace's lavish rooms, as well as the grounds. The 120-hectare (300-acre) park and spectacular fountains, some 129 in total, were designed by Peter himself.

Pushkin (Tsarskoye Selo) (4 hr.; $45–$56): Drive 27km (17 miles) south of St. Petersburg to Pushkin (the village of Tsarskoye Selo was renamed Pushkin in 1937 after Russia's favorite poet, Alexander Pushkin) for a visit to the opulent summer residence of Catherine the Great. The estate was presented as a gift from Peter the Great to his wife in 1710 and was the main summer residence of the imperial family from Peter's reign until the fall of the monarchy in 1917. The palace was almost totally destroyed during World War II, but has been magnificently restored to its former splendor. You'll take a guided tour of several lavish rooms, including the Great Blue Room, Picture Gallery, and Amber Room. The surrounding park features Italian-designed grounds with numerous marble statues.

THE TOP ATTRACTIONS

Because of odd museum opening hours, long lines, labyrinthine corridors and display rooms, and a lack of English translations, you can literally get lost in the Hermitage, as Jerry did once while visiting with his wife and three other couples. It is best to see the top attractions here as part of shore excursions, or in a hired car—in both cases you get an experienced guide. Cruise lines offer a particularly large selection of shore excursions here, with something suited to nearly everyone's taste. At night, there may be organized excursions to folkloric performances or, if you're lucky, tickets available to see the St. Petersburg Ballet.

LOCAL FLAVORS

Restaurants in St. Petersburg are expensive and not all that great, although you may be surprised to find Chinese and Indian food in addition to the traditional Russian meat-and-potato offerings. Still, if you must try chicken Kiev and

blinis and caviar, and you don't mind paying top dollar (we're talking Paris prices), you're best off heading to a top hotel such as the **Grand Hotel Europe,** Mikhailovskaya ul. 1/7 (✆ **329-60-00**).

BEST BUYS

Shop here for *matreoshka* dolls, hand-painted lacquer boxes, caviar, fur hats, vodka, and amber jewelry. Good places to hunt for souvenirs are around **St. Isaac's Square** and the **market** near Spilled Blood Cathedral.

12 Scotland

Scotland's capital since the 600s, **Edinburgh** is situated on the south bank of the Firth of Forth, due south of the historic golf complex at St. Andrews. Its status as Scotland's seat of power took on renewed significance a couple of years ago when the country was granted a modified form of independence. The Act of Union (with England) in 1707 essentially disbanded Scotland's parliament and left Edinburgh a capital within the framework of Great Britain and answerable to Whitehall. The union is intact but Scotland now has greater authority to govern its own affairs, and many believe that complete independence is only a matter of time.

Edinburgh's primary tourist attraction is its 1,000-year-old castle, which dominates the city center. The rock on which it stands towers over Princes Street and the stunningly beautiful gardens there. The Royal Mile runs from the castle to Holyroodhouse, one of the Queen's Scottish palaces from which she left by horse-drawn carriage on that historic day in 1999 to open the Scottish Parliament, sitting for the first time in 300 years.

While hip enough in its own way—especially during the Edinburgh Festival each August—the city is redolent with history. Dark, ancient "closes" (narrow tenement alleyways) along the High Street have given rise to a flourishing trade in late-night ghost tours. Lesser castles, now in ruins, offer mute testimony to the battles that raged in the area over the centuries, mostly between the Scots and the English and sometimes between the Scots and the Scots! The Tron Kirk, where John Knox, leader of the Protestant Reformation, held sway, displays architecture dating back to the 1600s. And the world might be very different today without some of those born and/or raised in the city: Alexander Graham Bell (no telephone), James Simpson (no anesthesia), Sir Walter Scott, John Buchan, Robert Louis Stevenson, Arthur Conan Doyle (think of the great literature lost). Perish the thought, there might have been no James Bond movie series had it not been for Edinburgher Sean Connery making the on-screen character famous.

CURRENCY Although the country is now somewhat independent, the Scottish currency is still the British pound, exchangeable at press time at the rate of $1 = £.60

LANGUAGE English.

FROMMER'S FAVORITE EDINBURGH EXPERIENCES

- **Strolling along Princes Street.** The castle and the massive Walter Scott Monument are on one side, Victorian and more modern architecture on the storefronts on the other.
- **Visiting during Edinburgh Festival month.** During the event held each August, not all of the entertainment is of the paid variety. Walk on Princes Street or Charlotte Square or the West End and you may find a German

youth choir singing *a cappella* on one street corner, a juggler on another, a mime farther along, or a harpist outside a department store. They'll take donations but essentially it's a street show for free.

- **The Military Tattoo,** an integral part of the festival, displays military precision marching, Highland dancing, and all kinds of pomp and ceremony. It's held in the evening in front of the castle on the forecourt where seating is erected. We defy anybody not to be moved by the finale: A lone piper on a parapet over the castle main gate—illuminated by the only light in the entire forecourt—playing "Amazing Grace."
- **Sampling the pubs along Rose Street.** The street parallels Princes Street, a block south, and is reputed to contain more public houses than any other of its length. They used to say in Scotland that you were not a man until you had had one drink in every pub on Rose Street.
- **Visiting Deacon Brodie's Tavern.** On the Royal Mile, near the castle. Brodie was a prominent Edinburgher, a city councilor who also happened to be a burglar in the wee hours. He was said to have inspired Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.* He was hanged in 1788.

COMING ASHORE & GETTING AROUND Most ships are too big to enter Edinburgh's docks (at Leith, a couple of miles from the city center) because of a narrow lock at the entrance. Smaller ships, such as Silversea's *Silver Cloud* and *Silver Wind* (but not the company's newer, somewhat bigger vessels), can negotiate the lock. Others must anchor offshore or dock on the other side of the Firth of Forth and bus their passengers into town, a drive of an hour or so.

THE BEST SHORE EXCURSIONS

We recommend that you take the cruise line's shuttle (there may be a charge of up to $30) into town (it'll almost certainly drop you off near Princes Street) and do your own thing. The city **bus service** will take you anywhere you want to go and **cabs** are plentiful. There are also **double-decker buses** (open upstairs) that offer tours of the historic Royal Mile, Holyroodhouse, the King's Park, and more that leave from the side of the Waverley Railway Station. But much of Edinburgh is for walkers, anyway.

THE TOP ATTRACTIONS

Edinburgh Castle Much of the castle's past is shrouded in mystery, due in part to inadequate record-keeping. It may have taken much of its present form during the reign of Malcolm III, in the 11th century. Mary, Queen of Scots, gave birth to James (later James VI of Scotland and James I of England) in Edinburgh Castle, and her chambers are open to the public. The castle also houses the Scottish Crown Jewels and the famed Stone of Scone (say Skoon) on which Scottish kings were crowned for centuries.

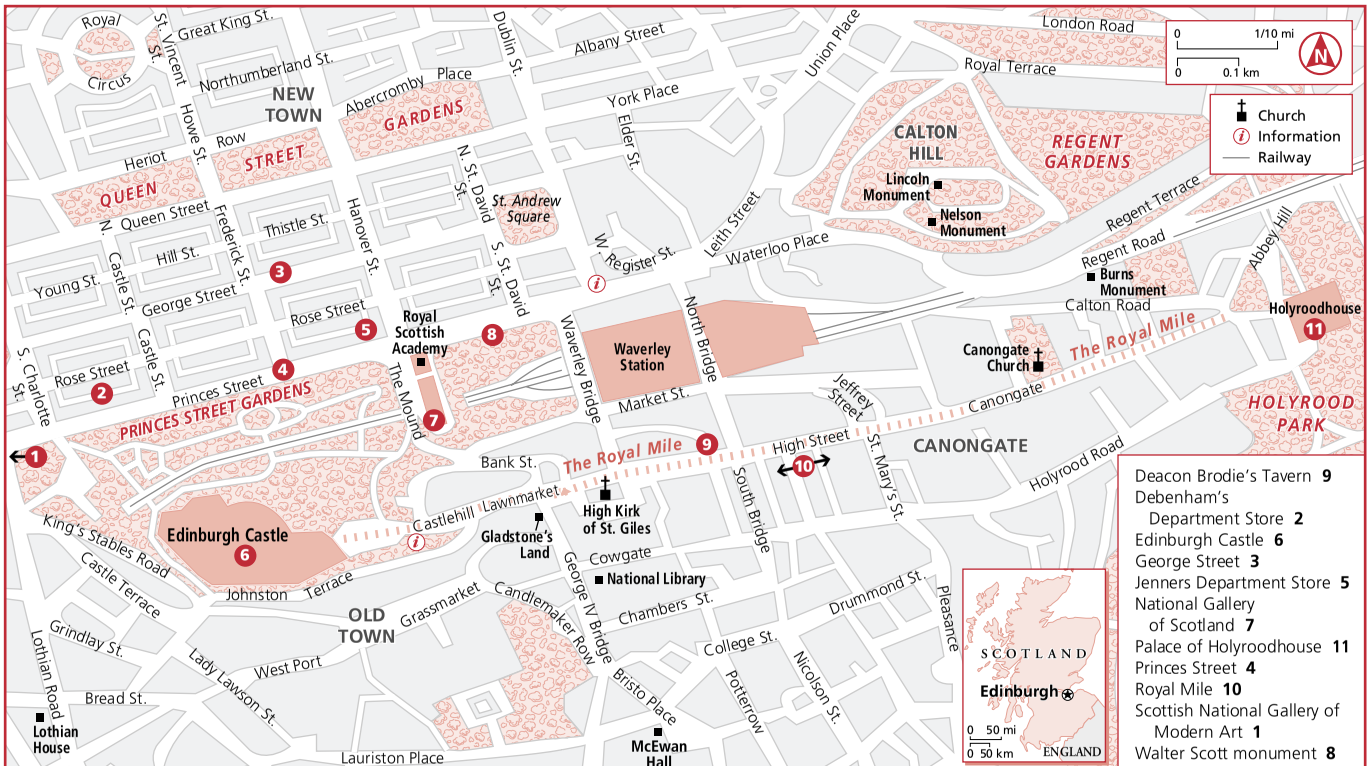
Castle Hill. ✆ **0131/225-9846.** Admission £8 ($13) adults, £6 ($9.95) students and seniors, £2 ($3.35) children 15 and under. Apr–Sept 9:30am–6pm; Oct–Mar 9:30am–5pm.

The National Gallery This is small as national galleries go but contains some fine paintings by Titian and Gainsborough alongside works by Scottish artists such as Henry Raeburn and Alexander Naysmith.

2 The Mound (which runs south off Princes St.). ✆ **0131/624-6200.** Free admission. Mon–Sat 10am–5pm; Sun 2–5pm.

Palace of Holyroodhouse An official residence of Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip, Holyroodhouse has for centuries been home to a succession of

Edinburgh



Deacon Brodie's Tavern **9**
Debenham's Department Store **2**
Edinburgh Castle **6**
George Street **3**
Jenners Department Store **5**
National Gallery of Scotland **7**
Palace of Holyroodhouse **11**
Princes Street **4**
Royal Mile **10**
Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art **1**
Walter Scott monument **8**

royal figures. In 1566, Mary, Queen of Scots', Italian secretary (and, some say, lover) was slain here by her husband, Lord Darnley, and numerous accomplices. Bonnie Prince Charlie threw a gala affair in its main room during the Jacobite Rebellion years of the mid-1700s.

Canongate, at the eastern end of the Royal Mile. ✆ **0131/556-7371.** Admission £6.5 ($11) adults, £5 ($8.30) seniors, £3.30 ($5.50) children 15 and under; £17 ($28) family (2 adults and 2 children). Daily 9:30am–4:45pm. Closed 2 weeks in May and 3 weeks in late June and early July (dates vary so check in advance).

Princes Street Gardens View hundreds of acres of greenery, flowers, trees, a bandstand where summer lunchtime concerts are often held, a fabulous floral clock, picnic areas, and leafy glades. And it's all free.

Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art This former school building, which dates from 1828, offers an international collection that includes Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth sculptures, Picasso, Braque, Matisse, Miró, Ernst, Lichtenstein, and Hockney, as well as English and Scottish artists including William Turner and John Constable.

Belford Rd. ✆ **0131/556-8921.** Free admission except for some temporary exhibits. Mon–Sat 10am–5pm; Sun noon–5pm.

Walter Scott Monument The views from this Gothic-style tower are stunning, but be forewarned: It's a tough slog up those stairs.

East Princes St. (overlooking the gardens). ✆ **0131/529-4068.** Admission £2.50 ($4.15) adults. Open daily at varying times.

LOCAL FLAVORS

Scotch broth, a beef, barley, and vegetable soup, tastes great in the right atmosphere—like in the shadow of Edinburgh Castle. The very Scottish dish of **haggis** reflects the necessities and culinary capabilities of the poor who tilled the highland soil and tended the sheep in olden times. Time was, it comprised all kinds of low-grade animal parts and oatmeal (some people would say sawdust) cooked in the stomach of a sheep. Fortunately, those days are long gone and haggis is made under strictly hygienic conditions, using only government-approved cuts of meat and filler. Try it; you might like it! In traditional Scottish restaurants, you might also come across **skirlie** (or skurlie), a side dish of potatoes or oatmeal fried with onions.

BEST BUYS

Needless to say, one of the prime products is tartans—from kilts to pants. Some of the sellers will also offer to trace your genealogy for you or at least to tell you what clan you're affiliated with. (Believe us, they'll find one!) Edinburgh Crystal is another fine product, as are woolen goods.

Princes Street is one of the major shopping areas with very good stores including the city's two best: Debenham's and Jenners. **George Street** and the **Royal Mile** also offer plenty of shopping opportunities, as do **Leith Walk,** at the east end of Princes Street; **The Bridges,** also nearby; and **Lothian Road** and the **Haymarket area,** in the west.

13 Sweden

Mixing Renaissance splendor with modern skyscrapers, Stockholm is built on 14 bridge-connected islands in Lake Mälaren, which marks the beginning of 24,000 islands, skerries, and islets stretching all the way to the Baltic Sea. Plan to be on deck as your ship cruises through the archipelago.

While the medieval walls of Stockholm's Old Town are no more, the 13th-century cobblestone streets are well preserved and a real treat to visit. Here, within walking distance of the cruise ship pier, you'll find the Royal Palace, ancient churches, historic merchant houses, and dozens of restaurants and shops (including art galleries and antiques stores).

Another must is Djurgården (Deer Park), the site of many of the city's popular attractions, including the open-air museums of Skansen and the *Vasa* man-of-war. You can get there easily by ferry. If you want to explore the archipelago further, or are just looking for some quiet time, boats leave frequently in the summer from the harbor for the bathing resort of **Vaxholm** and other scenic islands.

CURRENCY Sweden's basic unit of currency is the krona (plural kronor). One krona is divided into 100 öre. Banknotes are issued in denominations of 20, 50, 100, 500, 1,000, and 10,000 kronor. The rate of exchange at press time was $1 = 7.81 kronor.

LANGUAGE Swedish. English is also commonly spoken.

FROMMER'S FAVORITE STOCKHOLM EXPERIENCES

- **Exploring Gamla Stan (Old Town),** especially at night. The narrow cobblestone streets are specially lit. It's like going back in time.
- **Taking a ferry to Djurgården.** Here you'll find the Vasa Ship Museum and other popular attractions.
- **Watching the summer dawn.** If you can get yourself out of bed at 3am in midsummer, you're in for a treat.
- **Fishing.** You can even fish in downtown Stockholm, casting a line within view of the king's palace for some fine salmon.

COMING ASHORE & GETTING AROUND Cruise ships dock about 1.5km (1 mile) from the city center, and within easy walking distance of the Royal Palace and Gamla Stan (Old Town). You can get around by **bus, subway** (T-bana), and **tram** (streetcar). **Taxis** are available at the pier, but are expensive. The meter starts at about 37SEK ($4.75). A short ride can easily cost $14.

THE BEST SHORE EXCURSIONS

City Tour (3 hr.; $46): This comprehensive city tour begins with a short drive up to Fjällgatan for a panoramic view of the city, then heads through Gamla Stan, the medieval Old Town, and passes the Royal Palace.

The itinerary proceeds past the Royal Dramatic Theater along Strandvägen to the island of Djurgården for a tour that includes the Vasa Museum. Continue through Diplomatic town to Østermalm, a fashionable residential neighborhood, then on to Hamngatan and Sergel's Torg, the focal point of modern Stockholm. Proceed south past the Parliament Building, past the House of Nobility, and via the narrow canal at Slussen to Södermalm, the large island on Stockholm's south side. An alternative tour substitutes a visit to Stadshuset, Stockholm's imposing, red-brick city hall (where they hold the Nobel Prize Banquet), in place of the Vasa Museum.

Historic Stockholm & Sigtuna (6½ hr.; $115): This tour offers a driving tour of the city, a walk through Old Town, a stop at the Vasa Museum, and a drive through the scenic countryside to visit Sigtuna on Lake Mälaren. This religious village was founded approximately 1,000 years ago by the first Christian king of Sweden, and even today is a bastion of religion and education. Includes lunch and shopping time.


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Fredsgatan
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Centralbron
Myntgatan
Kungliga Slottet
Skeppsbron
Stora Nygatan
Lilla Nygatan
Österjärnvägsgatan

THE TOP ATTRACTIONS

Drottningholm Palace Modeled on Versailles, this palace, built on an island about 11km (7 miles) from Stockholm, is the actual home of Sweden's Royal Family. Inside are courtly art, royal furnishings, and Gobelin tapestries; outside are fountains and parks. Nearby is Drottningholm Court Theater (✆ **08/759-04-06**), the best preserved 18th-century theater in the world.

Drottningholm. ✆ **08/402-62-80.** Admission 60SEK ($7.70) adults, 30SEK ($3.85) children. May–Aug daily 10am–4:30pm; Sept Mon–Sun noon–3:30pm; Oct–Apr Sat–Sun noon–3pm.

Kungliga Slottet (The Royal Palace) This 608-room Italian baroque palace is one of the few official residences of a European monarch open to the public (though the king and queen prefer to live and bring up their children at Drottningholm—see above). A changing-of-the-guard ceremony is offered here Monday to Saturday at noon and on Sunday at 1pm. You can also tour the State Apartments. The Treasury exhibits a celebrated collection of crown jewels, while the Royal Armory has weapons, armor, gilded coaches, and coronation costumes from the 16th century.

Kungliga Husgerådskammaren. ✆ **08/402-61-30.** Admission to apartments, Museum of Antiquities, and Treasury: each museum, 55SEK ($7) adults, 40SEK ($5) seniors and students; Royal Armory, 70SEK ($8.95) adults, 35SEK ($4.50) children. Apartments May–Aug daily 10am–4pm; Sept–Dec Tues–Sun noon–3pm. Museum of Antiquities June–Aug daily noon–4pm; Sept and May noon–3pm. Royal Armory, daily 11am–4pm.

Nationalmuseum (National Museum of Art) One of the oldest museums in the world (established in 1792), the collection here offers rare paintings and sculpture, from Rembrandt to Rubens, Bellini to van Gogh.

Sødra Blasieholmshamnen, a short walk from the Royal Opera House. ✆ **08/519-54-300.** Admission about 75SEK ($9.60) adults, 40SEK ($5) seniors and students, free for children 15 and under. Tues and Thurs 11am-8pm (until 5pm Thurs June–Aug), Wed and Fri–Sun 11am–5pm.

Royal Flagship *Vasa* This 17th-century man-of-war is the world's oldest identified and complete ship and the biggest tourist attraction in Stockholm. It capsized and sank on its maiden voyage in 1628. Salvaged in 1961, the ship has been carefully restored. Some 97% of its original sculptures were also retrieved.

Galärvarvet, Djurgården. ✆ **08/519-54-800.** Admission 70SEK ($8.95) adults, 35SEK ($4.50) seniors and students, 10SEK ($1.30) children. June 10–Aug 20 daily 9:30am–7pm; rest of year Thurs–Tues 10am–4pm, Wed 10am–8pm.

Skansen Referred to as "Old Sweden in a nutshell," this open-air museum offers more than 150 dwellings from Lapland to Skaøne, most from the 18th and 19th centuries, that have been reassembled on about 30km (75 acres) of parkland. Exhibits range from a windmill to a complete town quarter; programs include folk dancing and open-air concerts.

Djurgården. ✆ **08/442-80-00.** Admission 70SEK ($8.95), 30SEK ($3.85) children. Jun–Aug daily 10am–10pm; Sept 10am–4pm; May 10am–8pm; rest of year daily 10am–4pm.

LOCAL FLAVORS

The best place to sample Sweden's legendary smörgåsbord is **Operakällaren** (✆ **08/676-58-00**), which is part of the Royal Opera Complex on Kungsträdgården and dates from 1787. The emphasis is on fresh fish, but you'll also find smoked eel, reindeer, Swedish red caviar, and grouse. There's a regular menu as well. The price tag for the smorgasbord is around $45, and reservations are required. For a different experience, try **Lisa Elmquist** (✆ **08/660-92-32;**

reservations recommended), a cafe and oyster bar located in the produce market (Østermalms Saluhall). A favorite here is shrimp with bread and butter for 135SEK to 186SEK ($17–$24).

BEST BUYS

It seems like anything of Swedish design is gorgeous, including housewares, hand-blown glass, wood items, and handicrafts, but they can all be pricey. Items to watch for include kids' clothes, silver jewelry, reindeer gloves, stainless-steel utensils, Swedish clogs, hand-woven items, and woolens. Everybody's favorite shopping area is **Gamla Stan** (Old Town). The main street for browsing is **Västerlånggatan.**

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Germany
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Greece
Greek Islands
Hawaii
Hong Kong
Honolulu, Waikiki & Oahu
Ireland
Israel
Italy
Jamaica
Japan
Las Vegas
London
Los Angeles
Maryland & Delaware
Maui
Mexico
Montana & Wyoming
Montréal & Québec City
Munich & the Bavarian Alps
Nashville & Memphis
New England
New Mexico
New Orleans
New York City
New Zealand
Northern Italy
Norway
Nova Scotia, New Brunswick & Prince Edward Island
Oregon
Paris
Peru
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Portugal
Prague & the Best of the Czech Republic
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Scotland
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Shanghai
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South America
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